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THE GYPSY GENTLEMAN.



OR,
NICK FOX,
The Demon Detective.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "THE DOUBLE DETECTIVE," "RED
RICHARD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.
A MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR.

NIGHT!

And the inky darkness that reigned over the surface of the earth was so dense that not even a star could be discerned peeping through "the blanket of the night."

Yet, close to the midnight hour, a solitary boatman plied his oars on the broad stretch of water which washes the eastern shores of Manhattan Island, on which is situated the metropolis of the New World, the city of New York.

This wide and rather turbulent passage is known as the East river, although in truth it is not a river, but a strait, and is the highway for all crafts bound eastward from New York.

On one side of it lies the great city, on the other Long Island, which separates it from the sea.

"IT'S A BARGAIN AND I'LL DRAIN THIS GLASS TO THE SUCCESS OF THE VENTURE!" CRIED CHEEKY BOB.

In its center, a few miles from its junction with New York Bay, lies the bit of land, notorious in song as the "Isle of Blackwell," or to give it its more prosaic title, Blackwell's Island, where the city prisons are situated.

On the Long Island bank opposite the refuge where the metropolis sends its petty criminals, its homeless vagabonds and its unfortunate wretches bereft of reason, lies the pretty suburban village of Ravenswood, where many of the wealthy men of the great city find congenial homes, their princely estates running to the river's bank, thus affording them boating and bathing-houses.

It was a strong flood-tide, and the boatman, who was a brawny, rough-looking fellow, all muffled up as though he feared recognition, in a common working boat, of the kind commonly called Whitehall, had the bow of his craft pointed to the south, and only used his oars to counteract the influence of the tide, so as to keep about level with a light on the New York side near 46th street, old Turtle Bay, once, in by-gone days, a famous rural resort for the citizens of our modern Babylon, but huge piles of brick and mortar have taken the place of the pleasant gardens.

It was a night in early spring, the air was chilly, and the boatman, evidently on the watch for some signal from the shore, swore in a frightful manner, as the keen air seemed to cut him to the very bone.

"Will they never come, darn their ugly carcasses!" he muttered.

Hardly had the words left his lips, when a bright light was suddenly displayed on the shore near 46th street.

Thrice the light cut a hole in the night, and thrice it disappeared.

It was the signal for which the boatman waited evidently, for the moment the light disappeared for the third time he bent to his oars and sent the light craft skimming over the water, heading for the point where the signal had appeared.

One of the city lamps upon the shore served as a guide so that he could lay out the correct course.

He ran into Turtle Bay. In the street which ran along the water-side stood a common covered express wagon; the light from the gas-lamp at the nearest corner dimly illuminated the scene.

Two men stood by the wagon, burly, brutal-looking fellows, muffled to the throat in heavy overcoats, and with slouch hats pulled down low on their foreheads, exact counterparts of the boatman, and they glared nervously about them as though they feared that they might be surprised.

"Come, come, hurry up, don't be all night 'bout it!" growled the boatman, as he brought his boat up alongside the dock. "Do you s'pose I want to be juggled all along of yer slowness?"

"It's all right; the cop has jest gone by, and he won't be along this way for another hour," replied one of the others.

But the two were at work even while he spoke. From the wagon they drew a shapeless mass, contained in a long, heavy canvas bag.

It was so weighty that it required the strength of both of the men to lower it into the boat; then one of the fellows climbed down into the craft, and the other mounted to the box of the wagon.

Away went the vehicle up the street; out shot the boat into the river.

A minute later and all signs of life vanished. With the career of the wagon we have naught to do; with the boat much.

The oarsman pulled a good stroke, plainly betraying that he was a waterman and no land-lubber.

Straight across the stream he went as though he intended to make a landing on the opposite shore, but when he got about half-way across, a fact he could easily determine by a solitary light which shone from one of the city buildings on the lower end of Blackwell's Island, he brought his boat around and headed with the tide toward Ravenswood.

Along went the boat, past the pest-house and the hospitals on the lower end of the island; past the Penitentiary, where the striped-suit convicts toil; past the warden's residence, and then the oarsman began to slacken in his labor and allowed the boat to float along with the tide, always rapid in this part of the river.

"Are we pretty near there?" asked the man who sat in the stern, of the oarsman, the shapeless thing in the bag being extended along the bottom of the boat.

"I reckon so, but I ain't so certain 'bout the place. I never was there, you know. The instructions were that after I got about the middle of the island to only pull enough for to keep the boat level and let her drift with the tide until I saw two green lights about three feet above the level of the water; then to pull in to shore and pass between the green lights which would fetch me into a boat-house."

"That's plain enough; you can't miss the place."

"Not very well, so jest keep your eyes peeled for the green lights."

"All right. Hello!" he exclaimed, abruptly, "there they are; put her in to the shore."

The boatman obeyed the injunction.

The lights were small, and shone star-like in the gloom.

As the boat came up, by the aid of the feeble light of the signal lamps, the twain could see that they were approaching a handsome boat-house, so arranged that a boat could run into it.

The tiny lanterns hung on each side of the entrance, but apart from their dim light the interior of the boat-house was in utter darkness.

When they were fairly within the house, the two peered about them.

"I wonder where our man is?" quoth the oarsman, unable to perceive any evidence that any one was on the lookout for them.

"Cuss me if I want to wait here long!" exclaimed the other. "I'm as cold as a frog!"

"You needn't talk, you ain't been loafing in the middle of the river as I have for an hour or more, waiting for you fellows to come to the scratch. I'm chilled clear through to the bone, and nary drop of whisky in my flask either."

At this point the conversation was suddenly interrupted by the opening of a trap-door in the ceiling above their heads, allowing a few feeble rays of light to descend.

Both of the men in the boat looked up, and beheld a man dressed in a plain, dark suit, with a black hood drawn over his face so that his features were completely concealed; in his hand, which was singularly white and effeminate, he held a lantern.

He peered down into the boat, and held the light so that its rays fell upon the mysterious object in the bag.

"Have you brought it all right?" he asked.

"Right as ninepence, governor!" replied the oarsman.

"Take the rope and fasten it so that I can draw it up!" and the man threw down a coil of half-inch rope, which ran through a pulley attached to a beam in the upper part of the boat-house, evidently a part of the tackle used for hoisting the boat belonging to the house.

"Oh, we've got the article all right enough; but, I say, governor, there was a leetle matter of a hundred dollars—"

"Certainly, of course that's all right; you are a leetle anxious for the money?"

"It's worth the hundred, governor; it is a mighty ticklish job, and jest think of the risk if we were ketch'd!"

"The risk is all over now, so don't let that worry you; here's your hundred, catch!" and the masked man dropped a roll of bills through the trap-door into the boat.

The oarsman counted them eagerly, growled out that the amount was correct, and that he was much obliged, and then proceeded to fasten the rope around the bag, in which he was aided by his companion.

It was not an easy task, but when it was accomplished the oarsman gave the word, the man above stepped back from the opening, spoke to some one in the room above, then the rope was laid hold of, and slowly the strange, shapeless package rose from the boat and passed through the trap-door, and the moment it cleared the ceiling, the voice of the masked man exclaimed:

"Good-night, gentlemen!"

The trap-door fell with a bang, the boat was pushed out into the river, and said the oarsman to his fellow:

"That's a mighty sly coon, you bet!"

CHAPTER II.

THE GOLDEN IDOL.

AND just about the same time that this mysterious occurrence, the particulars of which we have just detailed, was taking place on the East river, another affair, almost as strange, transpired on the banks of the sheet of water that bounds the island of Manhattan on the west, the North river as it is commonly termed, being the lower part of the majestic Hudson.

Fort Washington, on the upper end of the island, resting close to the river's edge, is noted for being the residence of some of the men who are a power in the metropolis.

It is a scattered settlement, truly rural in its appearance, and some of the princely estates situated there are not excelled by anything in the country.

One of them in particular, an old-time mansion, dating back to the days when "George was king," but now modernized and improved, was a park-like domain, fit for an exiled emperor.

It was known far and wide as Pinecroft, and was now occupied by a gentleman of independent fortune, by name, Gideon Gloster, an Englishman by birth, but who had resided for years in Central America, where he had acquired a colossal fortune.

Mr. Gloster had purchased Pinecroft about a year previous to the time of which we write, and had expended money with a lavish hand in improving the estate, and being a genial, polished gentleman, a man with a great deal of natural magnetism, he found no difficulty in making friends, and in a very short time became one of the most popular men in the neighborhood.

Gloster was quite a young man, although he had passed through adventures enough to fill full the compass of an ordinary life.

He was tall and muscular in build, evidently

a man of great strength, distinguished-looking, with an impressive face, although he was almost as swarthy in hue as an Italian, but this was evidently due to his long sojourn in a hot clime.

He had dark eyes and hair, which curled in tiny ringlets all over his head, wore a full beard, parted at the chin in the English style, and always dressed in the height of fashion.

On the night of which we write he had "received" his friends. He was a bachelor but kept up an elaborate establishment presided over by a housekeeper, a grim, stern-faced, precise, middle-aged woman, Mrs. Majorbanks by name.

The grounds of the mansion extended clear to the water's edge, the railroad, which was here some little distance from the river, running parallel with it, being spanned by an elaborate rustic bridge, and on this occasion were all decorated with colored lights, it being the intention to give a "garden party," but the chilliness of the night had driven the guests within doors.

But a couple still lingered without the mansion; in the conservatory was the host and a lady who, by common consent, was acknowledged to be the belle of the evening.

And a regal beauty truly was Ophelia Bullwinkle, daughter of old Judge Abraham Bullwinkle, so long and favorably known as a politician of the first water, the first statesman of New York, his friends and admirers declared, the shrewdest "wire-puller" in the land, even his enemies admitted.

She was a tall, queenly girl, with an oval face, regular features, classically cut, and the most superb dark-blue eyes that ever looked out of a woman's head, and a wealth of golden hair the envy of all her female friends.

That such a glorious beauty—old Bullwinkle's heiress, too, and it was currently reported that the judge was worth a million or so—should have a multitude of suitors, goes without saying; but the heart—or fancy, rather, for all her acquaintances were quite decided in saying the girl did not possess such a thing as a heart—had never apparently been affected until the appearance upon the scene of Gideon Gloster.

Then the gossips noticed that the lady betrayed a liking for the gentleman's society, often enjoyed a drive on the road behind his celebrated team, for Gloster drove a pair of flyers which cost a cool five thousand apiece, and, in fine, his suit had progressed so well—Gloster had paid the most devoted attention to Miss Bullwinkle from the moment he first became acquainted with her—that on this evening he had made bold to speak to the old judge in regard to the matter.

"I am almost a stranger to you, you know," he said at last, after delicately broaching the subject and finding that the old gentleman was noways averse to the matter, "but I think I can satisfy you in regard to my position—"

"Egad, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Bullwinkle, who was an explosive, gray-haired, gray-whiskered old gentleman, with a round red face and a form which betrayed that he had not neglected creature comforts in his passage through life, "I don't wish any assurance upon that point. I know you as well as though I had been acquainted with you all my life. By Jove! you are a man after my own heart. You ought to go into politics—with your gifts and the wealth you have to back them—money is the main thing in politics as well as in war, you know—there isn't anything in the country that you couldn't get."

"I must admit that I have very little taste for that sort of thing; you work the oracle and I will find the funds."

"That is a capital idea, and between us, my dear boy, I've no doubt we will make Rome howl."

"Can I count, then, upon your influence with your daughter?"

"Certainly, by all means."

"I follow the foreign fashion, rather than your American one, of speaking to the father first, for I have not approached Miss Ophelia upon the subject, although I have no doubt that with the shrewdness natural to her sex she has long since divined the motive of my attentions."

"No doubt about that. The girls of to-day my dear fellow, are sly—deuced sly."

Thus encouraged, Gloster determined to seize upon the first opportunity to press his suit with the girl.

A chance remark of hers in regard to how beautiful the conservatory looked with the colored lights within it, induced the invitation to enter and inspect it.

And at the further end of the glass-walled structure, secure from observation, the gentleman took occasion to press his suit.

The girl answered frankly.

"Mr. Gloster, I do not know what to say to you," she replied, her eyes downcast, her face troubled.

"Pardon me if I have offended you, and forgive me if I say that I fancied my attentions were not disagreeable to you."

"They were not—they are not, I admit that," and a deep blush swept rapidly over her face, "and yet I am in doubt in regard to my feelings toward you. I will own that I have taken great pleasure in your society, and yet now that

we are here alone together, and you speak the words which my conduct has encouraged you to utter, I am at a loss for a reply. I like you—have liked you from the first, have felt toward you as I never have toward any other gentleman; and yet now that I am called upon for a decision that will influence all my future life, I do not know what to say."

The gentleman looked amazed. In truth he had counted so confidently upon a favorable answer that for a moment he was at a loss for words.

"But why should you feel in this way?" he asked, after quite a pause. "There must be some reason for it."

"I do not understand myself at all," she answered, slowly. "I will not attempt to trifle with you by saying that this avowal was unexpected, for it was not. I looked forward to it, and had determined to give you a favorable answer, but now that you have spoken, a strange feeling has taken possession of me, and when I look forward to a union with you I shrink with horror!"

"With horror!" exclaimed Gloster, gazing with astonishment upon the agitated face of the lady.

Ophelia was deadly pale, her lips were colorless, and she was trembling with emotion.

"Yes, it is the truth; I do not understand it at all. I have never experienced any such feeling before in my life."

"The abruptness of the avowal, perhaps," the gentleman suggested—he was greatly annoyed, but concealed the feeling with consummate skill. "You are of a nervous temperament; let us talk no more upon the subject at present; give yourself time to recover, and at some future day you may be able to give me a favorable answer."

The lady was greatly distressed, and gladly she returned to the drawing-room where the rest of the guests were assembled.

The party was quite a large one, and the absence of the two had not been noted, and by the time she entered the room Ophelia had in a measure recovered her composure, so that no one noticed that aught was amiss.

About midnight the gathering broke up, and as the host bade the guests farewell, the old judge seized upon a favorable opportunity to whisper in Gloster's ear:

"My dear boy, what luck? Did you succeed in coming to an understanding?"

"Not yet."

"Upon my word, you astound me. I declare I didn't think that there would be the least trouble about the matter, for Ophelia has always spoken in the highest terms of you, and when I have joked her about making a match with you one of these days, she always blushed and appeared confused."

"Oh, I've no doubt we will arrange the matter in time."

The guests were gone, and the master of the mansion was alone. He directed the servants to retire, and when they had departed he went into the dining-room, turned the gas down quite low, lit a cigar and stretched himself upon the sofa.

"Now let me see if I can't get at the truth of this matter," he muttered. "What devil's work was it that has come between me and my peerless demoiselle, the woman whose beauty I covet and whose gold I crave?"

CHAPTER III.

AN INTRUDER.

HARDLY had the words left his lips when a slight noise in the conservatory which led from the apartment attracted his attention.

"Hallo! what's that?" he murmured. "It sounded like a stealthy footstep."

His ears had not deceived him; there was some one in the conservatory, approaching the dining-room with the cautious tread of one who dreaded discovery.

Gloster acted promptly. He drew from an inner breast-pocket of his coat a small revolver, more a tool than a toy despite its size and gaudy ornaments.

Carefully he cocked it so as not to alarm the intruder, for he had a curiosity to see who it was entering the house in this informal manner.

The door of the conservatory opened slowly, the unknown evidently ready to take to his heels upon the first indication of danger.

Gloster hardly breathed.

The intruder was a tall young man, thin-faced, haggard and wan, dressed poorly, and yet there was something about him that told he was no common ruffian.

The sideboard attracted his attention. With a stifled exclamation he moved toward it, evidently with the intention of getting at the silver which he supposed to be within.

He drew a bunch of skeleton keys from his pocket and commenced to fumble with the lock, and as he did so Gloster rose noiselessly from the sofa, glided like a ghost to the gas, and with a single touch turned it up.

A gasp of horror came from the lips of the intruder as the light flooded the room so unexpectedly, and he instantly realized that he was surprised.

He faced about, drawing an ugly-looking

knife as he did so, only to be confronted with the cocked and leveled pistol in the hands of Gloster.

For a moment the two men glared at each other, and then there was a simultaneous cry of recognition.

"The Gypsy Tiger, by all that's wonderful!" the intruder cried.

"Cheeky Bob!" exclaimed the master of the mansion. "Well, you are about the last man that I expected to see."

"Strike me blind, if I ain't astonished; but, I say, don't fool much with that barker as long as you keep it pointed toward me; the bulldog might bark, you know."

"You are after the silver?"

"Yes. I'm down on my luck, and it's either starve or crack a crib."

"I thought you in prison across the water."

"So I was; but I served my time out, and when from quod I got free I made up my mind to emigrate. You see, Tiger, I was getting altogether too well known. The peelers had their eyes on me all the time, and there wasn't a chance to do a stroke of business, so I thought I would try my luck over here. You seem to have done very well, Tiger; this is a very tidy crib here, and you're dressed up as fine as a lord; but then you always were an out-and-outer, and never satisfied except when on a big lay."

"This is the biggest of my life. But put up your cheese-knife and take a chair. In the closet yonder you'll find some cold meat, bread and a decanter of brandy. Bring them out and help yourself, for you look half-starved."

"And no wonder! Wish I may die, Tiger, if I had a bit to eat to-day, except a little dry bread that I begged from a house down the road; but I say, how is it with you, Tiger? You're in clover, ain't you?"

"Oh, yes—so-so."

"But you always did have a head on your shoulders!" the other exclaimed, in admiration.

"Yes, a tolerably fair kind of head. But get your grub, and while you are eating we'll have a little talk about business. You are a clever rascal, and the best penman I ever met. I think I can put something better in your way than this job that you are on to-night. There's no silver here—nothing but plate, and no fence in the city would go you a five-dollar note on all the silver swag in the house."

"Well, that would have been a sell, so help me gracious!" the intruder observed, as he went to the closet, helped himself to a plate of cold turkey, some bread, and the decanter of brandy of which the master of the house had spoken.

Returning with them to the table, he sat down and proceeded to attack them in a manner which plainly showed how hungry he was.

"Now then, as the raw edge is taken off my appetite," he said, after about five minutes had elapsed, "you can fire away. But right at the beginning, understand, I'm your man for anything, no matter what, and I'm just as game as a pebble. I was true blue as a pal across the water, and I am just the same now. In the job that compelled you to emigrate, I got nipped while you cut and run. I might have got a lighter sentence if I had squealed, but I was too much of a man to go on that lay."

"You're game to the backbone, Bob, and as things are coming out you will not be any the worse for it," the other remarked. "If I didn't know exactly the kind of man that you are, I should not be apt to trouble myself to give you a lift. As you have doubtless surmised, I am now a swell of the first water."

"Oh, I believe you!" the other exclaimed; "but do you know, Tiger, your get-up was so good that I did not recognize you when you were in the conservatory talking sweet to that blonde-haired angel. I thought too that your voice was familiar, but I never suspected that you were an old acquaintance. Of course, from my hiding-place under one of the benches, I didn't get a very good view of you."

"Ah, you overheard the conversation, then?"

"Oh, yes, and I say, Tiger, it's a mighty big and bold game that you're playing!"

"That is the kind of a howling swell I am," the other replied, with a laugh. "That girl is one of the best catches in the city; she's worth a million or two in her own right, with the prospect of another million from her father when he hops the twig."

"Oh! ain't that a lovely prospect! Why, it almost takes my breath away!"

"I am known here in New York as Gideon Gloster, an Englishman by birth, but since early childhood I have resided in Central America, where, by a series of successful speculations, I have amassed a colossal fortune, and I have settled here to enjoy it."

"Beautiful! quite equal to the Arabian Nights—beats Sindbad all to pieces!"

"It is my intention to marry this lady, not for her money, being indifferent to such trifles, but because I want just such a woman to adorn my home."

"Splendid! Wouldn't it make the 'cross' coves over the water open their eyes to see you now!"

"Very likely. And now, as you overheard

the conversation between the lady and myself, you understand all about the affair. I thought I was sure of her, but I begin to believe from long experience that the only certain thing about women is their uncertainty. A whim has taken possession of her; some infernal animal like instinct has warned my beauty that I am not what I seem. At the last moment she fears to trust herself and fortune in my hands, but as in this world there are frequently wheels within wheels, although she is puzzled to account for this sudden feeling which has sprung up—and I believe she is honest in saying so—I believe I have discovered the secret of the change. Just by accident I have learned that she is in the habit, with some of her girlish acquaintances, of attending one of the leading theaters in the city where at present a dashing young actor is engaged, who is a great favorite with the ladies. One of those low vagabonds, you know, who, aided by the glamour and tinsel of the theatrical life, manages to turn the heads of silly and romantic girls."

"The idea of preferring such a low rascal to you, my noble captain of house-breakers," observed the other, sarcastically.

"Ah, but she doesn't know that. Well, Bob, I think the girl is impressed with this fellow, and that is why she is doubtful in regard to your humble servant."

"That is easy enough to find out; put a spy on her."

"That is the job exactly that I have picked out for you. I have told you what the world supposes me to be, but in reality I am at the head of the most extensive band of gentlemen who live by their wits and on the property of men better off in the world than themselves, that ever existed. Among ourselves we are known as the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye—the Gypsy Gentleman, you know, is one of my old titles. We are bound together by secret oaths, and we number in our ranks some men who stand high in the world's esteem. We lack a secretary—a man of your kidney; will you join us?"

"Will a duck swim?" cried the other, gleefully.

"All right. And now there is another matter upon which I need your aid. I have been in this country just about five years now, and during that time I have contrived to make a foe before whom I tremble," and his voice became deep and earnest as he made the confession.

"What? you tremble—you, the man with iron nerves, who never seemed to know what danger meant?"

"Yes, for this man who seems destined to haunt me is like a demon; like the man in the play, he bears a charmed life. Thrice have I attempted to slay him, and each and every time he has escaped me. Through my contrivance I had him sent to State Prison, but he even survived the terrible life at Sing Sing, and came back again to follow on my track, eager for vengeance. He has good cause for his action, for the fellow was in my way and I brushed him aside and trod on him as though he were but a worm in my path. He is now in Bellevue Hospital, the result of an encounter with some of my men that I put upon his track. I thought he was done for, but I hear to-day that the chances are good for his recovery. His daughter is here somewhere in the city, and I want her. You must arrange to settle the father and find the girl for me."

"It's a bargain, and I'll drain this glass to the success of the venture," the other cried.

The secret band had secured a valuable man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESURRECTION.

A STRANGE SCENE.

A large apartment, wainscoted in the olden style, with massive mahogany furniture, grim old pictures frowning from the walls, some ancient suits of armor, and in one corner a human skeleton mounted on a pedestal.

In the center of the apartment was a massive marble table upon which lay something covered by a white sheet—something that looked very much like a human form.

The windows were heavily curtained, and from the peculiar appearance of the apartment one used to such things would have set it down for the private study of a doctor.

And so it was.

Jonathan Overbock, as the owner of the mansion was termed, was an old New York physician, a man who had amassed a fortune by the practice of his profession and yet was universally disliked by all his professional associates.

Doctor Overbock for years had been a man with an evil reputation. All through his career he had borne the name of being a man who would do almost anything for money, yet had always been shrewd enough to keep out of the clutches of the law.

Twenty times at least suspicion had been directed against him, and the proper officers had sought to bring him within the toils, but the doctor had always been too sharp for them, and they had never been able to secure a hold on him, although they were morally certain that he was the man for whom the law was reaching.

Now, the doctor was supposed to have retired from active practice, but it was well known in certain quarters that his aid could be secured, provided the applicants were willing to pay a high price.

The doctor had purchased this old-fashioned mansion years ago, and had devoted considerable money in fitting it up to suit his fancy.

Despite his "crookedness," to use the cant and expressive term for one who falls into evil ways, the old man was an excellent doctor, and as a surgeon, ranked as first-class. He was a man who could have made plenty of money in the regular way, but he preferred the secret and underhand manner.

He was an enthusiast, too, a little cracked in the upper story, most of his acquaintances believed, for it was whispered that he was devoting his old age to the search for the twin delusions that have added the brains of some of the greatest of the ancient men of medicine, the Philosopher's Stone by means of which the baser metals could be transmuted into gold, and the Elixir of Life, the potent fluid which would ward off death and render the drinker forever young.

Another subject he had devoted much study to also—the making of diamonds by artificial means—forestalling nature as it were; diamonds are but carbon; it is an easy matter to reduce the precious stones to carbon, why cannot the process be reversed, and the carbon transformed into diamonds?

The doctor lived all alone in this great house with the exception of a single servant and a couple of ferocious bull-dogs who were always at large in the grounds without the house, so that it was as much as a stranger's life was worth to venture within the mansion's gates.

The servant was an oddity fully as remarkable as his master, being a hunchback, about as broad as he was long, with a head far too big in appearance for his body, sunken between a massive pair of shoulders, apparently joined right to the trunk the neck being done away with. His arms were so long that he could reach down and scratch his ankles as he walked, without trouble.

A strange servant, and well suited to his strange master, for the doctor was almost as odd in his appearance as the hunchback, whom by way of a joke Overbock had dubbed Galen Caliban, thus, as he was wont to say, honoring both the father of medicine and the greatest poet that lives in any tongue.

Overbock was a man of sixty, commanding in stature, with long white hair and a snowy beard reaching half-way to his waist. But apart from these indications and a few deeply-marked lines that seamed his face, he betrayed no signs of age, being as straight as a pine tree, and as steady in his tread as a gladiator.

Into the apartment, where on the marble slab reposed the shapeless mass that so nearly resembled in its distorted outlines a human form, came the doctor and the hunchback.

Over the marble table was a bunch of gaslights backed by a reflector so as to cast all their rays upon the slab beneath.

The hunchback bore a light in his hand, and after entering the room ignited the gas, so that the apartment was brilliantly illuminated.

"Galen, are the curtains all carefully drawn?" the doctor asked, as he took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves like a butcher preparing for slaughter.

"Yes, master."

"For such unusual light at such an hour as this might excite remark if any belated wayfarer should chance to notice it."

"No fear of that, master, the curtains are drawn so tightly that not a ray of light can be seen from the outside."

"My tools, then," commanded the old man.

The hunchback brought forward a small table upon which was a large, rather flat leather case.

He placed it by the upper end of the marble slab, opened the case and displayed a complete set of glittering tools such as are used by surgeons in the operating-room.

The doctor cast his eyes over the assortment and selected a keen-edged, sharp-pointed knife, whose blade glittered like silver in the light.

"This is a very interesting case," he remarked, as he ran his thumb along the edge of the blade to test its keenness. "This fellow has been quite a time in the hospital; he came there badly hurt, and for a good while it was a question whether he would live or die. Then, all of a sudden he began to mend, and those interested in the case felt certain he would get well, and then, equally as sudden, he gave up the ghost, and without the slightest warning. When the attendant made his rounds in the morning the man was dead."

"A very mysterious case, indeed! It has cost me considerable trouble and quite a little sum of money to get hold of the body, but plenty of cash will buy almost anything in New York, from the judges downward, and as I was determined to have the fellow's carcass, no matter what it cost, I succeeded. It was just by chance that I became interested in the matter, but as long as I was so, I resolved to satisfy my curiosity. I will soon ascertain the nature of

the disease that caused him to 'shuffle off this mortal coil.'

"There were a dozen after him, but as I was willing to pay more than the rest I secured the prize."

"Now, Galen, my boy, just turn down the sheet!"

The hunchback obeyed the command. It was not the first time that he had assisted at such an operation, and so he was not at all disturbed by the sight that met his eyes.

Upon the marble slab lay the figure of a young, well-built, powerful man.

The hunchback had only turned the sheet down half-way, so that only the upper part of the body could be seen.

"Magnificent subject, eh, Galen?" exclaimed the doctor, as he gazed with professional rapture upon the sight.

"See! isn't he a beautiful fellow! Just look at the muscles in the arms and chest. Why, this man is a regular Hercules! When he was in the flesh he must have been as strong as a lion. Egad! I'm a pretty strong man myself, but I am free to confess I shouldn't have liked to attempt to try conclusions with this wonder. With such muscles he ought easily to have been a match for half a dozen ordinary men."

"Who was he—what did he do?"

"No one knows anything about him; he is a stranger, picked up almost lifeless in the street one night by the police, with a terrible bruise on his head, as if he had been hit by a sand-club."

"What is a sand-club, master?"

"That is a weapon that the ruffians of Europe and America have borrowed from the midnight marauders of the far East. It is simply a long bag about a foot in length and a couple of inches in diameter, stuffed full of sand like a sausage. A blow from it, when wielded by a vigorous arm, will stun, and sometimes kill, and yet leave hardly a mark behind as evidence how the deed was done."

The hunchback shook his head.

"An awful weapon, master."

"You are right, Galen, and that is the reason why I am so anxious to examine into the cause of this man's death. I am curious to ascertain if the sand-club has caused any internal injury. Mind you, Galen, it was the universal opinion of everybody at the hospital that this man would get well. On the very evening before the morning when he was found dead, three of the doctors had exchanged notes regarding him, and there wasn't one of the three that was not certain that the man would be out within a week."

"Ah, master, doctoring is but the science of guessing, and we don't always guess right."

"Very true! you are a philosopher, Galen; but that little thing we must keep to ourselves, or else we medical men would have less money in our purses!" chuckled the old man. "But now for work!"

Knife in hand the doctor drew near, the hunchback also came closer; but suddenly an exclamation of horror burst from both their lips, and they started back.

The supposed dead man sat upright, and stared at them with glassy eyes, a perfect picture of the ancient Faust as depicted by the German artists, with his prominent features, his jet-black, elf-like locks and full beard, his face as colorless as the marble slab whereon he sat.

Never was there a more awful picture since the world began.

CHAPTER V.

THE STRANGER.

BOTH the old doctor and the hunchback were men of iron nerves, used, too, to death in its most horrid forms, and they soon recovered from the panic into which they had been thrown by the unexpected event, for the moment they took time to reflect upon the circumstance they understood how it happened; the mystery attending the death of the hospital patient was cleared away; the man had not died, but fallen into one of those peculiar trances so much like death that the most experienced physicians are sometimes deceived.

The man had revived from the state of coma as rapidly and with as little reason as he had gone into it.

"Well, my fine fellow, you have had a narrow escape," the doctor observed. "If I had made you acquainted with this little instrument here," and he displayed the glittering knife, "you would have been a dead man in reality, and all the drugs in this world wouldn't have done you any good."

An intelligent light shone in the man's eyes and he nodded as evidence that he understood, then he turned his head and surveyed his surroundings, winding up by fixing his penetrating eyes upon the hunchback, who appeared to be decidedly uneasy under the scrutiny.

"You may thank your lucky star that I took a fancy to experiment on you," the old man observed, "or else by this time you would have been in a pine coffin, with six feet of solid earth above you and with no chance of resurrection

until the last trumpet sounds on the judgment day."

"Well, it would not have mattered much," the stranger responded, speaking in a hollow, unnatural voice.

"Oh, wouldn't it? Then you had better lie down again and let me put the knife into you. I will engage that after I get through you'll be a fit subject for a coffin, and there will not be any doubt about the matter at all," the doctor remarked, dryly.

"As far as I am concerned it does not make any difference whether I live or die; if I were a free agent I had just as lief be out of the world as in it."

"You are speaking in riddles."

"But I do not ask you to attempt to guess them," and the man fixed his eyes upon the doctor in such a peculiar way that it really made the old man feel uncomfortable.

"Have you ever had one of these fits before?" asked the doctor, assuming a professional tone and endeavoring to shake off the uneasy feeling inspired by the stranger.

"Never."

"Such things are very rare; you were lucky not to have been buried alive. Were you conscious of what was going on around you?"

"Perfectly so."

"I have read of such cases but I rather doubted the truth of the stories."

"To judge by my own experience you were wrong to doubt. I fell into the trance as one would fall into a sleep, excepting that the brain still steadily worked on and I was conscious of all that passed around me. I understood every word that the doctor said when they held the consultation at my bedside after my supposed death."

"I overheard even the bargain that you made with that scoundrel to whom my body was given for burial and who agreed to sell it to you for fifty dollars. I was conscious all the time that I was being transported hither crammed into a bag with no more thought than if my body had been the carcass of a worthless dog."

"My dear sir, the transaction was all in the interest of science. The dead must be examined that the living may live," responded the old man, smoothly.

"Well and good! let those who believe in that doctrine live up to it by willing their bodies to the dissecting-room, but none of it for me!" exclaimed the man, with an air of disgust.

"As I have told you, it has been the means of saving your life."

"Yes, but neither you nor the others had any such idea in your heads. It was an accident, and you have no right to claim credit for it."

"Perhaps not, but I repeat it was a lucky accident for you; if it had not occurred you would never have seen your friends again."

"Friends!" and a bitter laugh escaped from the white lips of the stranger.

"Yes, your friends."

"I haven't any; I haven't even an acquaintance in the world. I am all alone; for five years I have been dead and buried; I am a creature possessed of an unnatural life, who ought to be in the grave, but I walk the earth for a purpose, just as Heaven is said to allow the spirits of those unfortunate souls who had been grossly wronged and hurried out of this breathing world before their time, to revisit the 'glimpses of the moon,' until their foul, unnatural murder is avenged. And so I, the spirit only of what I once was, stalk through life, intent on vengeance, and I can never know rest or peace until it is attained."

The hunchback appeared greatly disturbed, and even the old doctor was not entirely at his ease.

"My friend, you must excuse the remark, but really you are talking as if you were a little touched in the upper story," the doctor observed.

"Oh, no, I am in perfect possession of my senses as far as my head is concerned; my heart is where the trouble is."

"Your heart?"

"Yes; I haven't any such thing; it has been transformed into stone by the terrible wrongs which have been inflicted upon me, and I am now a demon, incapable of pity or compassion, and my mission henceforth is to hunt down and bring to justice the vile wretches who have made me what I am."

"But how about this little episode?" Overbock inquired. "I know that I have slightly overstepped the limits of the law, but as it has resulted favorably to you I presume you will not make any trouble about it."

"I suppose I ought not to, but in justice I must take measures so that such a thing cannot happen again."

"You mean to proceed against the man with whom I made the bargain, I presume, also the two rascals who brought you across the water—delivered the goods, I may say?"

"Yes, those are the men whom I will punish. I will take measures so that they never again will have an opportunity to pocket such ill-gotten gains!" exclaimed the stranger, with a menacing air.

"But, my friend, if you push matters to extremities you may bring me into the affair,"

and I assure you, such a thing would be decidedly unpleasant."

"It cannot be avoided as far as I am concerned. I will not take any steps against you, but if you are drawn in, why you must look out for yourself."

The old man had been examining the speaker closely, and a puzzled, uneasy expression gradually crept over his face—a look greatly resembling the one that the hunchback wore.

"By the way," he said, abruptly, "I haven't had the pleasure of learning your name yet."

The stranger shook his head.

"Will you oblige me with it?"

"I haven't any name, I lost it long ago," and there was a world of sadness in the tones of the man as he spoke.

The doctor pretended to laugh, but it was a sorry attempt at mirthfulness.

"This is like a page out of one of the old-time romances, *The Haunted Castle*, or *The Three Spaniards*," he remarked. "A man without a name is something odd in this bustling world."

"The defect is easily remedied; within a year I will make a name upon hearing which the boldest villain in New York will tremble!" the stranger declared with an emphasis that made his hearers decidedly uneasy.

"Upon my word, you are one of the most remarkable men that I ever came across; but I will not fatigue you now with further conversation. In yonder room is a good, soft bed; suppose you retire and make yourself comfortable for the night. I will send you in a hot drink for a night-cap, and in the morning we can talk as long as we like."

"Thank you; you are very kind. I shall strive not to forget the service. I am not so strong as I thought I was, although I am pretty certain that I am out of danger."

"Oh, yes, a few hours' rest will fix you all right."

Then the doctor, with the aid of the hunchback, assisted the unknown, who had so providentially been rescued from a horrible death, into the adjoining apartment, saw him snugly in bed, and then returned to the outer room.

"Master, do you recognize him?" exclaimed the servant, in a cautious whisper, after he had securely closed the door between the two rooms.

"Do I recognize him?" and a peculiar look appeared on the man's face. "What do you mean by the question? Do you think that I ever saw him before?"

"Yes, I am sure of it, although the lapse of years has changed him wonderfully, and he has aged greatly. It is about five years since we saw him, and yet he looks twenty years older."

"Five years!" the doctor gave a slight, nervous start and looked around him anxiously as though fearful of being overheard.

"You remember that affair five years ago, when for your services you received ten thousand dollars?"

"Yes, yes."

"This is the man."

"I fancied so, although I did not recognize him at first; why, Galen, my life would not be worth a pin's fee if he should discover that I am the man who did him that awful wrong."

"Master, you are in danger while that man lives and is at liberty," observed the hunchback, significantly.

"At liberty! Upon my word, Galen, you suggest ideas to me. Listen; he acts strangely, and it is important to all who have had a hand in this matter that he be got out of the way. I will drug him and then have him conveyed to the lunatic asylum; when he wakes and tells his tale, all will believe that it is but the delusion of a disordered brain."

"It will work, master!" cried the hunchback.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ODD ADVENTURE.

THE performance at Niblo's Garden Theater had just ended and the vast audience which had gathered in the spacious play-house that evening to witness the grandest spectacular drama that New York had seen for years came pouring out into the street, delighted with the entertainment that they had witnessed.

One of the best companies of dramatic artists that had ever been collected in the country had been engaged, headed by the popular young tragedian, Harry Mortimer, generally admitted to be the most promising actor of the age.

Young in years, not yet thirty, with the face and figure of an Apollo, coupled with the strength of a Hercules, a gentleman in every sense of the word, with undeniable talent for the profession which he had chosen, it was little wonder that he secured a hold upon the capricious audience of the metropolis superior to that of any other actor who craved their applause.

In person, Mortimer was a tall, well-built fellow, with regular, expressive features, curling dark-brown hair and eyes like Mars to threaten or command.

After the audience had dispersed a little knot of loungers gathered around the back-door of the theater on Crosby street, eager to see the performers depart, anxious to see how the heroes

and the beauties of the stage look when robed in the common garments of every-day wear, and as there were a large number of ladies employed in the drama, there being a "Full Ballet" and an "Amazonian March" in the production, the attendance at the stage-door was always liberal at the close of each entertainment.

There was seldom any female in the throng except in the daytime, but at the close of the matinee there were always some curious girls hovering near, anxious to see if their stage favorites looked the same in the prosaic light of day as when behind the magic glare of the foot-lights.

But this night of which we write, a little remote from the rest, a slender female, robed in complete black, rather poorly dressed, and closely veiled, waited to see the performers come forth.

Many a curious glance was cast at her by the motley throng gathered around the stage-door, but as she was meanly attired and seemed to shrink from observation, without anything about her to indicate whether she was old or young, the most of the bystanders who took the trouble to notice her at all, came to the conclusion that she was the mother or sister of some one of the many girls employed in the theater.

Out came the actors and actresses by twos and threes and went their ways to their several homes.

One of the last to appear was Harry Mortimer, and by this time the throng had thinned out so there were only a few people around the door, but the veiled woman still kept her place.

The stage-manager of the theater and the young actor came out together; they had been talking business and so had lingered behind the rest.

"I'm going to have a chop and a mug of ale. Will you join me?" said the stage-manager, who was a jolly Englishman, fond of his creature comforts like the most of his countrymen.

"No, thank you, I am booked for a lunch at the Sturtevant; that is my head-quarters when I am in the city, you know."

"Good-nights," were exchanged, and the two parted. The Englishman went down the street, while Mortimer went up toward Houston.

Busy in his own thoughts, he took no heed of the black-robed form, although he passed near enough to the woman to have touched her, but she looked with eager earnestness into his face, and after he passed followed him at a discreet distance.

Mortimer went on, never suspecting that he had a follower until a little incident attracted his attention to the fact.

When he arrived within a few doors of the corner, two "swells," evidently out on a lark, and decidedly the worse for the liquor which they had imbibed, came down the street, passed the actor without comment, but when they encountered the woman they took it into their heads that she was fair game.

"You are out late my beauty!" exclaimed one.

"Just looking for an escort, my darling, ain't you?" cried the other, and they blocked the sidewalk so it was impossible for the girl to proceed.

Brought thus to a sudden halt she seemed dazed with fear, and clutching her veil drew it tightly over her face as if she dreaded recognition.

"I'll lay you a hundred dollars to fifty that she is as old as sin and as ugly as a hedge-fence! And that is the reason why she has muffled her face so tightly!" exclaimed the first sport.

"You are barking up the wrong tree, my boy!" replied the other. "She's a beauty! as young and tender as a spring chicken and as handsome as an opening rose-bud, and I'll go you a thousand to five hundred on it, and that's the reason she wears a veil. She knows she would set all the boys crazy if she dazzled the eye of night with her loveliness. How's that for poetry, you brute?"

By this time the girl had in a slight degree recovered from the alarm into which she had been thrown and was able to use her voice.

"I beg you will allow me to go on my way," she said, in a low, sweet voice, which fell even upon the indifferent ears of the two bloods like strains of sweetest music.

"Do you dare to say that she ain't young and a beauty, with a voice like that?" the second one of the two demanded. "Oh, catch me, somebody! I shall faint if I don't see your face!"

The loud tones in which the young men spoke had attracted the attention of the actor, and he halted for the purpose of ascertaining what was the trouble; but neither the girl, in her agitation, nor the swells, whose backs were toward him, noticed the fact.

"Gentlemen, if you are gentlemen you will permit me to pass!" she exclaimed, in a voice that trembled with alarm.

"If we are gentlemen; well, I guess there isn't much doubt about that!" the first fellow exclaimed, in bantering tones, "and you'll be the first to say so too when you come to know us; we're two of the boys, we are! Allow me to make you acquainted with my particular friend, John Smith, and my name is Jones; you must have heard of us; and what might your baptis-

mal appellation be, my darling Sarah Jane, Anne Matilda?"

"If you do not allow me to pass I will call the police!"

Both of the young men greeted this threat with a shout of laughter.

"The police, oh, my!" cried one.

"Why, if one should come along, we'd give you right in charge for annoying us on the street, and then you would be locked up for the night, although I've no doubt that would be only an old story to you."

"Will you let me pass?" the girl cried, indignantly.

"You must show us your elegant face first!" and then, with a quick motion, before the girl was aware of his intention, he tore the veil from her face, and the moment they beheld her features, an expression of astonishment escaped from their lips.

The girl was young and wondrously beautiful; dark eyes, glorious in their luster, dark hair clustering in little tiny ringlets over her forehead; her skin olive-tinged, but so thin and transparent that the rich red blood beneath could plainly be discerned.

Take her for all in all she was as perfect a brunette beauty as either of the two young men had ever seen, and yet they were good specimens of the gilded youths of the metropolis, mingling in the best society that New York could boast, and prided themselves upon their knowledge of feminine beauty.

"Well, partner, you would have lost your shekels if you had bet against me!" exclaimed the insolent fellow who had removed the veil.

With trembling hands the girl adjusted the veil over her features again.

"Oh, I made a bad break; I'll have to own right up to that," remarked the other. "And I've no doubt my blushing beauty here is 'mad' all through at me in being idiotic enough to believe for an instant that she was anything but the loveliest and most angelic of her sex. But I'll fix that up all right now. I am not idiot enough to keep on when I find I have made a donkey of myself. I'm ready to do the fair thing and make amends for my mistake by standing the shot for an oyster or game supper and the best half a dozen bottles of wine that money can buy in New York."

"Couldn't be anything fairer!" chimed in his companion. "And I say, my darling, haven't you got any lovely female acquaintance in the neighborhood who could be persuaded into joining the party?"

Mortimer had drawn near, unobserved, so that he had overheard the latter part of the conversation and also gained a full view of the beautiful face of the girl, and now he thought the time had come for him to interfere.

The actor was rather a prudent fellow, not at all inclined to be hot-headed, and he wanted to be sure of his ground.

The woman might be one of those unfortunates who make reprisals upon just such gilded youths as these two and he did not care to become mixed up in any disgraceful brawl, but now that he had ascertained exactly how matters stood he advanced and quietly said:

"Haven't you gentlemen made a mistake? Don't you think you had better go on your way, and attend to your own business?"

The bloods turned upon him roughly; they were just enough under the influence of liquor to be amazed and indignant that anybody should attempt to interfere with their amusement.

"What's the matter with you?" demanded one.

"Clear out or we'll wipe the sidewalk with you!" cried the other.

"Why, you cowardly curs!" cried the actor, in contempt, "there isn't manhood enough in a dozen like you to stand up against a ten-year-old boy!"

CHAPTER VII.

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN INTO THE FIRE.

THE comfortable bed felt grateful to the mysterious stranger after all the perils through which he had passed, and it was with heartfelt thankfulness that he received the steaming-hot glass of brandy and water which the hunchback brought to him.

"There, drink that, go to sleep, and you will feel like a new man in the morning," Galen remarked, as he handed the fragrant beverage to the unknown.

"That is what I want. I crave strength. I want to get well as soon as possible!" he murmured, "for I have a terrible task before me—a task which is enough to appall a man with nerves of iron and a heart of stone, and that is the way I must be in the future."

There was a strange expression in the eyes of the misshapen attendant as he listened to these strange utterances, but the patient, sipping the warming drink, did not notice it.

"By the by, your master is a doctor, I presume?"

"Yes, sir," and the hunchback looked anxiously at the questioner.

"He may be able to be of some assistance to me, then."

"Assistance to you?" and Galen peered closely in the other's face.

"Yes, I have some business—important business," and the speaker paused in his sentence to chuckle hoarsely for a moment, "business which cannot be postponed, to transact with a certain doctor who dwelt in New York five years ago."

"What is his name?" and the hunchback grew nervous in his eagerness.

"His name!" muttered the man, shaking his head, while a vacant look crept over his face.

"Yes, I am well acquainted with a great many of the doctors, and perhaps I may know him."

"I don't know his name."

By this time the man had finished the liquor, and the fumes mounting to his head seemed to overpower his senses.

"If you don't know his name, how will you be able to find him?" asked Galen, an expression of great relief appearing on his face.

"The avenging hatred of fate will lead me to him," murmured the patient, fast relapsing into a dreamy state. "He will walk blindly on, unconscious that, stanch as the bloodhound on the trail of the fleeing fugitive, I will follow after him, hunt him out from amid the wilderness of lies in which he seeks shelter and strike him down with a ruthless arm."

"Man is but man, and fate is fate! We cannot escape our destiny, no matter where we go, nor how anxious we are to avoid being called to an account."

"He lives—I will find him, even though he should try to flee from me and seek the furthest end of the earth—vengeance, vengeance, vengeance—" and then he sunk into a profound sleep.

"Oh, this man is a demon!" the hunchback cried, as he hurried from the room.

The glass of brandy was heavily drugged, but the stranger, suspecting it not, drained it to the very dregs, and this was why he so soon relapsed into slumber; and he slept so heavily that when the old doctor and the hunchback stole into the room half an hour later, and came to examine the man, they thought at first that they had made the dose too large, and thereby had thrown the patient into a slumber from which he would never awaken.

But soon they were undeceived on this point, and the old man shook his head.

"He's not dead, but will wake in eight or ten hours, refreshed and vigorous," he remarked.

"Are you sorry, master?" asked the hunchback, with a meaning glance.

"Well, I don't really know; if we could make out that the fellow died by natural causes and escape unpleasant consequences, I think I should prefer to have him dead rather than living, for I have a suspicion that he is of the bloodhound breed, and will not rest until he has hunted down all those who have ever wronged him."

"It is easy enough to compass his death, master, if you so desire," and the face of the misshapen man grew dark as he scowled upon the sleeper.

"Yes, yes, I know that," the other replied, nervously, "but, Galen, I am not so young as I once was; I shrink from all acts that may bring upon my track the dogs of the law. I have enemies, you know—enemies that would be only too glad to get a hold upon me if they could. My reputation, unfortunately, is none of the best, and any accusation brought against me would be readily believed, for the first thing that my accusers would do would certainly be to rake up all the old charges against me, and so prejudice the public at large."

"Give a dog a bad name and hang him," remarked the hunchback.

"Exactly, and so I mean to keep out of the clutches of the law as long as possible. I should not have justice done me, and I've no mind to be sacrificed to the insane howlings of an ignorant mob. This fellow must be got out of the way, and I have thought of a plan which I am sure will be pretty certain to work, and without exposing me to any danger either; that is the main point just now."

"Yes, master, and from what he said just before he sunk to sleep"—and Galen nodded toward the prostrate man—"I feel sure that while he is at liberty you are in danger," and then he repeated the disjointed utterances of the unknown.

"Galen, I'm not going to kill the fellow," the doctor said, mysteriously, "but put him in a place where he will be well taken care of for a few years. The party who is in charge of the institution is under deep obligations to me, and then too he is one of that kind of men who are on the make, as long as it can be done quietly and without detection. I know I can fix matters with him, and our friend here, when once under his care, will be powerless to work me evil."

"It must be done quickly, master," the hunchback observed. "I gave him a powerful dose, but he is a powerful man, and the effects of the drug will soon pass away."

"I will attend to it immediately," and the doctor made a movement toward the door. "And, Galen, if he should chance to wake up, which I do not think is likely for eight hours at least, persuade him to take another dose."

"Oh, trust me for that!"

Then the doctor hurried away.

But the calculation which he had made in regard to the effects of the drug upon the unknown was correct.

Fully eight hours the man slept, never even turning in his bed, and then gradually awoke.

It was bright daylight.

He looked around him for a moment, and then sat upright in the bed, thoroughly astonished. He was no longer in the strange, old-fashioned room in the doctor's house, where he had retired to rest, but on the contrary in a small apartment with white-washed walls and a bare floor, and the only articles of furniture within the room were the little iron bed which he occupied and a common wooden stool.

The room was a narrow, cell-like apartment with a door at one end and a small window at the other.

In the upper part of the door was a little square hole so that any one passing along the corridor on the outside could look into the room without opening the door.

Through the window he could see the restless waters of a river, and beyond it a rocky shore upon which grew a few trees.

A strange transformation had taken place in his personal attire too. He had been brought into the old doctor's sanctum scantily clad, but now he was fully robed in a coarse, dark suit, such as would be worn by a laboring man for every-day use; stockings and shoes even were on his feet.

"What on earth is the meaning of this?" he muttered. "How did I come in this place and where did I get these clothes?"

And as he pondered over the questions the sound of a heavy step in the corridor came to his ears.

Then a coarse, brutal face peeped in through the hole in the door.

Hardly had the stranger caught a glimpse of the face when it disappeared, the grating sound of a heavy key turning the wards of a rusty lock followed, the door opened and the owner of the face entered.

He was a big, brawny, six-foot-tall fellow, with an ugly face and a brutal manner.

In his hand he bore a small, yellow bowl two-thirds filled with a discolored liquid, strongly resembling dishwater, and on the top of the bowl were two large slices of coarse bread.

"Well, cully, how do you feel this morning?" he ejaculated familiarly, as he advanced.

"I feel all right," and as he answered he swung his feet to the floor. "What is the meaning of this—where am I?"

"Oh, you're all right, don't you fret; we'll take good care on you. You're perfectly safe here; nobody will git in to harm you, you kin jest bet yer bottom dollar on that!"

"But what is the meaning of it—what am I doing in this place and who are you?"

"Oh, come, come!" the man responded in what was intended to be a soothing manner.

"You mustn't shout out like that or cut up rusty, you know. That's clean ag'in' the rules. I'm a friend of yours, I am, and this hyer is your breakfast. I kinder went outside of the regular thing and brought you up a bowl of nice soup, 'cos I thought it would strengthen you up a bit. You needn't be afeard that thar's any p'ison into it, 'cos I'll take a sup of it myself for to show you that it is all right."

"Poison! what on earth do you mean?" and the speaker rose with such a menacing air that the big fellow retreated a step.

"Oh, come, none of that, you know!" he exclaimed, menacingly. "Don't you go to be violent now or we'll be obliged to go for you, and it won't be pleasant; we've got strait-jackets and padded cells for violent lunatics."

"Lunatics! why, man, in Heaven's name where am I?"

"In the Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A DESPERATE RESOLVE.

THE unknown staggered back as though he had received a blow in the face.

"In the Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island," he repeated, as though unable to believe that he had heard aright.

"That's w'ot I sed and that's w'ot I mean," the other repeated. "Oh, young feller, I'm giving it to you as straight as a string!"

"But how is it that I am here—when was I brought here, and by whom?"

"You are too much for me now, John!" responded the big fellow, with an attempt at facetiousness. "All that I know is that you are here and that I'm the man w'ot's got to look arter you, worse luck!"

"Send for your principal; I wish to see him immediately; this is an outrage. I am not a lunatic, and I demand my liberty!"

"Oh, yes, cert'—anybody with half an eye can see that you're all right," and the man spoke in the soothing way generally used to an injured child. "The doctor will be along in an hour or two and he'll fix everything up all right. Take it easy now, that's a good fellow!"

"Take it easy!" cried the unknown, in a passion.

"Yes, yes, don't get excited," and the attendant took another step toward the door, for,

big as he was, he didn't like the look he saw upon the face of the other, and dreaded an encounter.

"In course, take it easy; that's w'ot I sed," he repeated. "W'ot is the use of kicking up a precious row? It won't do you the least bit of good, you know; I'll only have to knock you down and sit on yer, and then you'll be rushed inter a strait-jacket and kept on bread and water; but if you're quiet and agreeable you'll be treated like a perfect gentleman. No use of trying to cut up rusty. I tell you w'ot it is, if I should hit you once with this fist you'd never know what struck you. Most men, when they come to, generally think there has been an earthquake and a brick house has fallen upon them," and the speaker held up a fist that looked like a small-sized shoulder of mutton.

"But through what devil's trick is it that I have been brought here?" the prisoner demanded.

"Come, guv'ner, you really must give me some easier question," the attendant responded, with a grin. "W'ot in thunder do you think I know 'bout the thing, anyway? I ain't in the office; the coves there know all about it, in course. All I know is that you're a new-comer and you have been put in my ward."

"And were you told that I was crazy?"

"Course I was!" and the man laughed at the idea of such a question. "What on earth would you be doin' here in a Lunatic Asylum if you wasn't?"

"There may have been some mistake about the matter."

"Cert'—that's the lay they all go on, guv'ner. Why, if you could believe the yarns the coves in this place spin, there ain't one of 'em that ain't all right and tight. But I ain't got anything to do with it, you know; so sail inter your breakfast and git ready for the doctor."

The advice was good, and the prisoner, calming the rage that boiled within his veins, endeavored to make the best of the situation.

Of course the attendant was but a hired servant and in no way to blame for his detention.

"You are not deceiving me?" he asked, a little suspicious that the man was only striving to make him contented with his lot, and that the doctor was only a myth.

"Oh, no, honor bright! I wish I may die if I ain't a-giving it to you jest as straight as straight kin be!" the attendant declared. "Why should I want to fool you? The doctor makes his rounds, reg'lar, every other day, and this is his morning for this ward."

"Very well; I will talk to him then."

"That's the way to do it. I'll put your breakfast down onto the stool and you kin eat it when you get good and ready."

"All right."

The bowl of soup and the bread were deposited on the stool, and then the man retired. Straight to the principal of the institution he went and reported to him that he feared there would be trouble with the new-comer.

"What's the matter with him?" asked the superintendent, who was a red-faced, bull-dog-jowled fellow, with a bristling mustache of intense blackness and a surly expression.

"Oh, he's like all the rest; ain't anything the matter with him—wants to see the doctor and is going to get right out; but he's ugly, boss, I kin see it in his eyes."

"Why, you ain't afeard of him?" asked the superintendent, in a tone of contempt.

"Afeard of him!—well, not much, I guess!" cried the other, smarting at the imputation. "But at the same time I want you to understand that he's no slouch, and I reckon he'll fight like a son of a gun if he gits a chance."

"The doctor will give him a dose that will quiet his nerves. I'll speak to him about it."

And the superintendent was as good as his word, so that when the doctor made his visit to the new patient he was fully prepared for him.

After the attendant departed, the prisoner tried to reason out how it was that he had been brought to the Asylum.

All the events of the past were firmly fixed in his memory, and he felt sure that he was not laboring under any delusion.

Everything was all clear up to the time he had fallen asleep in the old doctor's house, but from that time forth he knew nothing until he had awakened in the Asylum.

"That infernal old rascal must have had me transported here; but why, what reason?" he mused. "Was he afraid that I would make a complaint and have him brought to justice for his share in that night's work?"

This was the only plausible reason that could be assigned, and the prisoner was obliged to be content with it.

After coming to the conclusion that the old doctor was solely to blame for his present plight, and that it would be an easy task to explain matters to the doctor when he came, he turned his attention to the breakfast.

"I will be even with that old scoundrel for this," he muttered, as he tasted the soup.

It was frightful stuff, and the prisoner, although he was really hungry, could not bring himself to eat it.

The bread, though, was good, and the captive devoured every morsel of it.

Then he amused himself by going to the window and noting the surroundings.

"Suppose they should attempt to keep me here?" he mused, as he looked forth upon the ever-moving surface of the shining river. "The thought is utter folly, of course; they would not dare to attempt such a thing, but suppose they should? I am no more insane than the attendant who waited upon me; but suppose that my story is not believed, and they should insist upon detaining me here? Can I not escape? I am an expert swimmer; I could easily make my way across the river if I could succeed in gaining its bank, and why can I not do that?"

While the prisoner was puzzling over this problem, footsteps again sounded in the entry. The door opened and the attendant admitted a burly, rather dissipated-looking gentleman, whom the captive at once took to be the doctor.

The impression that the captive formed of the medical gentleman was not at all favorable, for the man had a bad face.

"Well, how do you do this morning?" the doctor asked, in a brisk, matter-of-fact way, just as if he had been in the habit of seeing his patient daily for the past month.

"Very well, thank you. Are you the doctor?"

"Yes; hold out your tongue."

"I don't think that is necessary. I'm not sick."

"Oh, if you're well you don't need me, then," responded the doctor, in the most utterly indifferent way, and he turned about as if to depart.

"But, hold on, doctor, I want to talk to you a moment."

"Very well, go ahead, but be quick, for I've no time to spare."

"I want you to examine me."

"What's the use of that, if you are not sick?"

"But I am here in a Lunatic Asylum—"

"Yes, yes."

"And I'm not crazy; there's nothing the matter with me!"

"Will you take your oath on that?" exclaimed the doctor, with a jeering sort of laugh.

"Most certainly I will."

"What are you doing here, then?"

"That is exactly what I want to find out."

"The doctors that examined you, evidently thought you were crazy, or else they would not have testified to that effect."

"But I have not been examined by any doctors!"

"There, my friend, you see, is where your madness comes in. If you hadn't been examined and properly committed, you couldn't possibly be here."

"I was brought here in the dead of night, without my knowledge," cried the unknown, beginning to lose his temper.

"That's your madness again—a crazy idea that has taken possession of you."

"Do you think that I am crazy now?" and the prisoner advanced to the doctor and looked him straight in the eye.

There was a strange light gleaming in the dark orbs of the prisoner, but it was produced by anger, not madness.

"I have not had an opportunity to examine you thoroughly yet; after I have seen you for a week or two I can judge better," the other replied, evasively.

"A week or two!" fairly yelled the captive. "Do you think I am going to stay here for a week or two?"

"Certainly, and then if you are all right I'll see that you get out. I'll prescribe a little soothing draught for you; good-day!" and the medical man departed, leaving the prisoner almost wild with rage.

"It is a plot to keep me here," he muttered, when alone, "but I will be out of this den before this night is over if I am a living man!"

He bided his time, affected to be contented, but when the night was well advanced, with the stool he battered out the window, the casement being fastened so that he could not open it.

CHAPTER IX.

A SLIGHT DIFFICULTY.

"WHAT'S that you say?" cried the first blood, in high indignation. "Why, you low-lived hound, I've a good mind to smack you across the chops."

"If you are not both of you out of this in about ten seconds I'll make you wish that you had never been born!" the young actor cried.

This was more than the second swell could stand. He rather prided himself on his boxing abilities, and had drank just about enough liquor to make him quarrelsome.

"Let me attend to him, Will!" he cried. "I will take it as a personal favor if you do. I'll polish him off in ten seconds so his own mother wouldn't know him. Do you know who I am, young fellow? I'm Mace's Unknown!" and then he followed the boast with a rush at the man who had dared to interfere with his amusement.

Mortimer was an excellent boxer, in fact an expert in all muscular exercises, and it was an easy matter for him to ward off the wildly-delivered blows of the young blood, and then

when the attacker paused for breath he administered a scientific right-hander which landed between the eyes of the other and sent him rolling into the gutter.

With a yell of rage upon witnessing the discomfiture of his companion, the second swell essayed an attack, but was met with a powerful left-hander full in the face that caused him to sit down upon the sidewalk in an extremely hasty and very undignified manner.

This was the end of the difficulty. The two were not so much under the influence of liquor as not to realize that they had met their master, and both instantly came to the conclusion that they had run afoul of some Houston-street bruiser who gained a living by displaying to an admiring public his knowledge of the manly art of self-defense.

They picked themselves up, cried out, loudly, that they would seek an early opportunity to get square, and then, with their handkerchiefs to their bruised faces, retreated hastily down the street.

"You are at liberty now to pursue your way, miss," Mortimer said, removing his hat and bowing as respectfully to the rather poorly-dressed girl as if she had been a duchess. "I do not think that they will attempt to trouble you again."

"I—I thank you, sir," responded the lady, in a low tone, and hesitating as if she had a difficulty in speaking.

"Don't say a word about it, miss, but this isn't a good quarter for a lady to navigate at such a late hour as this, and so I hope you will not think that I am presuming if I offer to escort you to wherever you want to go; my name is Mortimer—Harry Mortimer. I reside at the Sturtevant House, and I trust that you will believe me when I say that I am a gentleman and will not presume upon the circumstances under which we meet any more than if you were my own sister."

"I can easily believe that, sir, and I am not afraid to trust you."

"Allow me to offer you my arm then."

The lady accepted it, but so delicately that Mortimer could scarcely feel the pressure of the touch.

"And now which way?" he asked, as they proceeded up the street.

"To Union Square, if you please."

"We'll turn into Broadway then," Mortimer remarked, rather puzzled at the direction, for it was extremely indefinite, and as the young actor had taken a lively interest in the girl, for he perceived that she was not only beautiful but a lady as well, he cherished a hope that he might be able to learn where she lived and so in time make her acquaintance.

It was something of a mystery though to him what such a girl was doing on the street at that late hour.

She was poorly dressed, yet had as dainty little hands as he had ever beheld affixed to a woman's wrists. No marks of toil on the hands, either, no tell-tale needle-prints on the fingers, so it was plain she was not a seamstress.

The two walked along for awhile in silence, but from the way in which the girl looked about her, Mortimer, who was a close observer, got the idea that Broadway late at night was a novelty to her, and if it was so, why on earth was she abroad?

Suddenly the girl spoke.

"If you had not come to my assistance what would have become of me?" she exclaimed. "I am sure I shall never be able to thank you sufficiently for the service you have rendered me," and her earnest manner clearly showed that the words came straight from the heart.

"Oh, you overrate the service," he replied, lightly. "The first policeman that came up would have caused the rascals to retreat in dismay. They doubtless too would have gone on their way of their own accord when they found that you resented their speeches. The trouble with them was that they had drank more than was good for them, and when the wine is in the wit is out, you know."

"I did not believe that any one would dare to trouble me as I proceeded quietly through the street."

"It is quite late, you see, and few ladies venture out at this hour without an escort."

"I did not know; I am so ignorant of all such things—" and then she came to an abrupt pause, as though she realized that she was speaking heedlessly.

And Mortimer wondered who on earth was this girl, and what was her station in life, that she could be a resident of the great city and yet not know that the public streets at the midnight hour were not pleasant places for an unprotected woman.

"But you were very kind; I shall not soon forget it," she said, hastily, as though she was afraid he was reflecting upon her unguarded remark and was anxious to turn his attention to something else.

"Now you will really oblige me if you will refrain from saying another word about it," he replied.

"But I must express my thankfulness; it is the only means I have at present of repaying the service," and even through her thick veil

the young actor could detect her beautiful, star-like eyes gazing earnestly upon his face.

"Oh, no, there is another way, if you will permit me to make it known to you," he replied, growing bolder as they approached Union Square, knowing that the time for parting was near at hand.

"Certainly," she said, but though she spoke calmly enough, Mortimer could feel the little hand that rested upon his arm so lightly tremble, and he guessed that she suspected what was coming.

"Although we are walking along arm in arm, and chatting like old acquaintances, yet I am aware that our introduction to-night is not according to the rules of polite society, and it does not give me the right to bow to you should I meet you on the street to-morrow," he said, in the mellow, pleasant voice which had already been his passport to the heart of many a stranger. "I will say to you, frankly, that I greatly desire to make your acquaintance, and I trust you will have confidence enough in me to tell me who you are and where you live, so that I may seek some proper person to introduce us in a formal manner."

Again he felt the little hand tremble, and after quite a long pause she said:

"I am afraid that I shall not be able to grant your request in its entirety at present, owing to reasons which I cannot very well explain."

"I am very sorry, for I trusted I should have the pleasure of making your acquaintance, but of course it is just as you say; if it cannot be, it cannot be, although I deeply regret it."

"Ah, but I did not say that!" she exclaimed, quickly, her sweet voice trembling as she spoke.

"I did not say that we must part to-night as strangers and never see each other again. I am sure I should regret that fully as much as you. I meant that there are circumstances, over which at present I haven't any control, which—which will not allow me to tell you where I live and invite you to call upon me, although I should dearly love so to do. But as for my name, you may call me Jennie Fox, and though I cannot tell you when or where we shall see each other, you may rest assured that this will not be our last meeting."

"I hope not," cried the young actor, impulsively.

By this time they had reached Union Square. "Conduct me across to the park, please, and then we will say good-by."

The mystery deepened; she couldn't very well take up her quarters in the park for the night, but where she was going was a puzzle.

When she gained the park sidewalk she stopped, offered her hand and said:

"Here we part; good-night. I will be sure to see you again, some time, believe that, and do not forget me!"

"I shall never forget you while I live!" Mortimer answered, with a warm clasp of the tiny hand.

A slight shiver seemed to shake the form of the girl.

"Good-night!" she repeated, in a trembling voice, and hurried away.

She went straight up the park sidewalk until she came to a carriage which was standing opposite Fifteenth street, into this she got and was rapidly driven away, going up Broadway.

Mortimer stood like a man enchanted, amazed at this movement.

A rude hand was laid upon his shoulder, and a hoarse voice said:

"Say, boss, are you a friend of that gal?"

Mortimer turned and beheld a rough-looking fellow with a whip in his hand, a hack-driver, evidently.

"Yes, what of it?"

"Then I kin give you a pointer, if you make it worth my while."

"I'll do it!"

"That 'ere gal is goin' to git into trouble; the feller w'ot drives the carriage has thrown off on her. I know him, he's an old Sing Sing bird. I heerd him and Jimmy, the Greek, a-confabing together, and Jim says: 'I'll lay for you jest the other side of Bloomingdale.' Now if you're game for a fight, jump into my coach, and I'll fetch you up in time to spile the trick."

"I'll do it!" cried Mortimer, on the instant.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE ROAD.

"COME ON, then!" cried the hackman, "git right onto the box with me. Turn up yer coat-collar, and pull yer hat down over yer eyes, so you won't look so much like a swell," the man counseled, as he and the young actor hurried to the coach, which was near at hand.

"If ye'r on the box, I kin talk to you and put you up to the trick, but if ye git inside thar won't be any chance."

"All right, I'll do just as you say," Mortimer replied, as he followed the injunction of the driver.

When they were fairly in the seat the hackman started his horses.

"I've got a right good team, hyer, though you wouldn't think it to look at 'em," the driver remarked, as he flicked the whip over the ears of the steeds. "I'll go round the block and git ahead of that hearse, and put you on the ground

afore they git thar. The Greek won't be apt to take us for the other party, 'cos he's only got one horse. If I was to try and foller on abind, the driver would smcke me in a minit and he'd give the office to his pal."

"Go ahead! You know best, and I'll stand something handsome if you succ ed in spoiling their plan."

"I'm game for it, you bet!" the driver exclaimed. "I owe that Jimmy, the Greek, a grudge, and I've been waiting for a long time for a chance to pay it off. He's an ugly customer, he is; he's jest come down the river from Sing Sing, jest out from a three years' sentence for house-breaking; he's up to anything. I don't mind telling you, boss, for I reckon you're a good, square man, I'm one of the Sing Sing canaries myself; not that I ever stole anything, but I got inter a fight with the Greek and his gang at a ball one night, and when they came for me to lay me out, I put a knife into three of 'em. It was self-defense, of course, but I got a year for it, all the same, and while I was up the river, being right in with all the crooks, I got put up to a thing or two."

"But I'm on the square, Cap, square as a die, for I ain't anxious to have any more of Sing Sing in mine."

By this time the carriage had made its detour and got back to Broadway again, and as the driver had predicted, he had succeeded in getting ahead of the vehicle.

"Thar it is, a block behind us," and the hackman directed the actor's attention to the carriage which contained the girl, just passing the Fifth Avenue Hotel, plainly visible, thanks to the electric lights at that point, which rendered all objects as plain as though it were daylight.

"That's a private concern, that 'ere, and belongs to some of the big-bugs, I reckon, from the style of the hull get-up. But the cuss wot is a-driving on it is as bad an egg as kin be scared up in the city; that's the reason my s'picious was excited when I see'd him standing on the square with such a rig, so I jest laid low to see wot was up, and when the Greek put in an appearance I made up my mind that thar was mischief in the wind. The two of 'em walked over and did a heap of talking by the trees, jest as if they were afeard that somebody would spot them, and that made me sure that something was up, so I kinder sneaked 'round and managed to hear wot the Greek said when he started off, and that was for the carriage to come along slow jest after it got to Bloomingdale, and he, Jim, would be on the lookout."

"In course I knew something was up, though I didn't know exactly wot. I kinder had an idee though from the style of the carriage that Dublin Pat was driving—Dublin Pat is the fellow's name among his pals—that he war up to his old tricks. Pat is a green-looking cove, nobody wot didn't know him would ever take him for an old rounder, and his little game is to git a job as coachman with some big-bug, then keep his eyes open, and some dark night, when things are working right, open the door of the house to his pals, p'int out where the boodle is, so the crib is cracked in a real scientific manner. In course, nobody suspects the greenhorn of a coachman. Why, to my certain knowledge that trick has been worked by Dublin Pat and his pals a dozen times."

"I should think you would inform the police," Mortimer suggested.

"Say, young feller, wot do you take me for?" demanded the driver, astonished at the ignorance of the other. "Do I look like a blooming idiot? Is thar anything 'bout me to give yer the idee that I have just cut and run from a Lunatic Asylum?"

"Oh, no, not at all."

"Well, wouldn't I be a idiot for to mix myself up in a matter where I'd be sure to git more kicks than thanks? If I should go to give the gang away, wouldn't they lay fer me? And as for the police, 'bout the first thing they would do would be to lock me up in the House of Detention as a witness. If I could step in and upset the game right at the beginning in a quiet way so as not to be known in the b'ling, like I'm doing to-night, thar might be some sense in it."

"But, as I was a-saying, when I tumbled to Dublin Pat to-night and see'd the rig he had, particularly arter I heered wot the Greek said, I reckoned that the boss, wot owned the carriage, had come down-town on business and the gang had put up a job to go through him when he went home, 'cos it's easy enough to do, for the Bloomingdale road is a mighty lonesome place 'round 'bout midnight."

"You must have been astonished when you saw that it was a lady?"

"Well, I was kinder taken aback, but with the gang that these fellers run with all's fish that comes to their net."

"But I don't really see what they can gain by an attack, for I don't think the lady has any valuables with her. She is very plainly dressed, no jewelry at all as far as I could see," Mortimer observed, thoughtfully.

The driver cast a peculiar side glance at the young actor and was silent for a few minutes, then he abruptly blurted out:

"See hyer! I don't want to poke my nose into

other people's business, but seeing as how I have kinder got mixed up in this affair, blame me if I shouldn't like to get the hang of the thing. You know that female woman, in course?"

"Well, I know her and I don't know her."

"How do you make that out?—axing yer pardon, in course, if I'm pinching you too close with my questions."

"Not at all, there isn't anything about the matter that I am anxious to conceal, and in a very few words I can tell you all I know about the lady."

And then he related how he had encountered her, suppressing the name of course.

"Pardner, don't it strike you that thar is something crooked 'bout this hyer business?" the driver asked.

"There is certainly something about it that I don't exactly understand."

"Wot is sich a gal as that a-doing out all alone at a time when most everybody is in bed, and with a first-class *coupe* a-waiting for her too? Why, pard, the annimile wot is hitched to that 'ere carriage never cost a cent less than five hundred dollars! I tell you wot it is, thar's something crooked 'bout the hull durned business, and don't you forget it, either."

It certainly was very strange, and the more Mortimer reflected upon the matter the deeper the mystery seemed to grow, and he said as much to his companion.

"Oh, we have got hold of the tail of a first-class rat, I reckon!" the driver declared. "I know from the way the Greek spoke that this hyer job is looked upon as a big thing. Thar's more to it than we kin see, and you kin take your oath on that!"

By this time the carriage was drawing near to Bloomingdale.

"I can't do much more for you," the hackman remarked, after informing his companion that they soon would be at their destination. "Are you heeled?"

"Armed, you mean?"

"That is wot I'm shouting!"

"I regret to have to say that I haven't anything bigger than a penknife."

"Gosh! that's bad, for the Greek will be well heeled and he'll use his we'pons, too, you kin bet your life on that! Hyer!" and the driver put his whip into Mortimer's hand. "This is a good bit of hickory and it will be better than nothing at all."

"Much obliged! How much shall I give you for your trouble?"

"Oh, a five-dollar note will be enough."

The money was paid, and then the hackman said:

"I'll turn round jest as soon as I git in the shade of that big tree ahead, and as I slack up you kin jump off without anybody being able to see you, s'posing the Greek is hiding anywhars in sight. Then I'll drive back, and after I pass Dublin Pat's hearse, I'll turn round and foller arter him jest as soon as it is safe for me to do it without letting him into the trick, so I kin be pretty near for to give you a helping hand if there is more than the Greek to the fore, and I think the chances are 'bout a hundred to one that he will have a crowd with him, 'cos he's one of them kind of fellers wot seldom travels without a big mob at his heels. I ain't anxious for to git inter any fuss, but you've treated me like a gentleman, and cuss me if I ain't a-going to see you through this hyer b'ling if I kin."

"I'm very much obliged indeed, and I will try to return the favor some time if it is ever in my power."

By this time the shelter of the trees was reached—it was a clear night, and the new moon, slowly rising, afforded light enough for objects to be plainly distinguished.

The hackman slowed his horses into a walk, wheeled them around, and Mortimer seized upon the opportunity to leap lightly to the ground.

"Don't forget that the Greek will use his we'pons in a minit if he's cornered," cautioned the driver, in a hoarse whisper; "so, if he shows fight, go for him for all you're wu'th!"

Away went the coach, and the actor, crouching in the shelter of the trees, grasped the stout whip-handle, no mean weapon, and surveyed "the vantage of the ground."

Not a sign of life except the rumble of the wheels of the departing coach, and the faint sound of the horse's hoofs of the *coupe*, rapidly approached.

CHAPTER XI.

A SKIRMISH.

THE hack had disappeared in the gloom, and the *coupe* was just making its appearance over the brow of the distant hill.

The actor looked around him.

The spot was a lonely one, the houses being few and far between, and therefore it was well-suited for an ambushade; but a few hundred yards further on was a still better spot for the purpose, and as he couldn't discover any signs of any one in the neighborhood, he came to the conclusion it was probable the highwayman was concealed further along the road, and, possibly, in the dark nook so well-suited for such a thing.

Within five minutes the *coupe* passed him, the driver beginning to slacken his pace a little and keeping a vigilant lookout ahead, as if anticipating the appearance of his comrade.

Mortimer had determined upon a course of action.

He had evaded the scrutiny of the driver by lying down flat upon the ground when the carriage approached, and the moment it got by him he sprung nimbly to his feet, darting out into the road with noiseless steps, and clung to the back of the carriage, easily managing to keep up with it, the noise of the wheels drowning the sound of his footsteps.

Neither the girl within the vehicle, nor the man upon the box, had the least suspicion that they were honored by the presence of a running footman.

As the actor had surmised, the lonely spot, a few hundred yards further on, was the place selected by the footpad.

As the carriage rolled within the gloom of the trees, a man suddenly sprung out of the dark shadows that lined the road.

He leveled a revolver at the driver.

"Shtop yer baste and come down out of that wid ye, or I'll put a leaden pill into yees!" the footpad cried sternly, and his accent plainly betrayed that it was not without reason he was called the "Greek."

"Oho, for the love of Moses, don't shoot!" cried the driver, apparently in an agony of fear, as he hurried down from the box.

"Go to the head of yer boss and attind to the baste while I spake to the lady; and mind, don't ye turn yer eyes this way, or I'll be afther putting as many holes in yer as there is in a sieve!"

"Don't shoot—don't shoot! Shure, I'll do jist as ye tell me!" exclaimed the man, assuming to be in a state of extreme terror, acting, for all the world, as if he was frightened out of his wits.

"Do as I tell yees and I'll spare yer life, but if ye as much as wink an eye this way, I'll be afther blowing the hull top of yer head off, do yer mind?"

"Oh, yis—oh, yis!" and the coachman hurried to the head of his horse, while the footpad approached the window of the *coupe*, where the pale face of the girl appeared, looking out anxiously.

She had overheard enough of the conversation to understand that danger threatened.

"Now, miss," said the highwayman, opening the door of the coach and assuming a fierce expression, "I'm in a hurry! I'm the toll-collector on this road, and I'll be afther troubling you to hand out all the valuables that ye may have about ye. I don't want to use violence to a lady, but if ye don't fork over I won't be answerable for the consequences," and he flourished the revolver as if he meant to murder the girl there and then.

Mortimer had crouched behind the carriage so as to escape observation, and now, thinking the proper opportunity had come for him to interfere, he sprung forward and dealt the ruffian such a terrific blow on the head with the butt end of the whip that it brought him to the ground, stunned by the shock.

The girl uttered a glad cry as she looked upon the face of her preserver.

"Oh, Mr. Mortimer!" she exclaimed; "you have come to my rescue just in the nick of time, exactly as you do in the play when the heroine is assailed!"

Mortimer was somewhat astonished at this, for it revealed to him that the girl knew who and what he was, a fact which he had not suspected.

The coachman, his attention attracted by the sound of the heavy blow, had turned just in time to see the footpad go down like a log under the stroke, and now he stood and stared, undecided what he had better do in the emergency.

"I am very glad indeed to be able to render you a service."

"And it is a great service!" she exclaimed, hastily, "for I have valuables with me that I would not lose for the world!"

"In that case, then, I had better accompany you home," the actor remarked, rather puzzled by the statement, for the poorly-dressed girl did not seem like one apt to prove a rich prey to any robber.

"Oh, but I am safe now," she murmured, in great confusion, while a vivid blush crimsoned her face. "The coachman will drive me to where I wish to go."

"He is a scoundrel, and is in league with this wretch whom I have disabled. Accident revealed to me the existence of this plot to stop the carriage, although I did not know what the motives of the villains were; but your coachman is as big a rascal as the other."

Mortimer spoke cautiously, but the purport of the disclosure reached the listening ears of the rascal—he had wonderfully keen hearing—and perceiving he was unmasked, he was quick to act.

Plucking a revolver from his pocket, he leveled it at the young actor and fired, relinquishing his hold upon the horse's bridle-rein in order to do so.

Murder was in the man's heart, but his aim was not as good as his intent, for the ball only came within an inch of Mortimer's head, and the principal effect of the discharge was to frighten the horse, a high-spirited, mettlesome animal, already chafing at being out so late and anxious to get home to his stable.

The moment the pistol-shot rung in his ears away he went with a bound, the door of the carriage shutting with a violent bang, precipitating the girl upon the floor of the vehicle.

The driver had twisted the reins around the whip standing in its socket upon dismounting, and so everything was in fine condition for a runaway, and the steed raced up the street at a pace which would not have disgraced a "three-minute" horse.

The driver made no attempt to stop him, and the actor could not if he would, for the moment the ball whistled past his ears he understood that he was dealing with a desperate man, and he must disable him before he could get an opportunity to fire another shot.

So, as the scoundrel fumbled with the hammer, essaying to cock the pistol for another attempt, Mortimer sprang upon him.

With the whip, which had already done such good service, he essayed to repeat upon this rascal the trick which had put the first scoundrel out of the fight in so summary a manner; but, warned by the fate of his comrade, the coachman threw up his left arm and broke the force of the blow; in spite of this, however, he got a rap that made him see stars for a moment.

He succeeded in cocking the pistol though, but as he discharged it Mortimer deftly knocked the weapon out of his hand, and then closed in with him.

The coachman, who was a big, burly fellow, weighing about a couple of hundred, uttered an exclamation of satisfaction as he grappled with the young man.

Confident in his superior strength he thought he would have an easy job now that he had come to close quarters with his foe.

"I've got you now, darn yer skin!" he growled, and he infolded the other in a grasp of iron.

"That is something that admits of considerable argument," Mortimer retorted, as he in some—to the coachman—inexplicable manner wriggled out of the other's grasp, took an "under-hold," in spite of his antagonist's efforts to prevent it, and then, with a sudden exertion of his strength, brought the other down to the ground with a thud that for a moment knocked the wind out of him.

But, by this time, the Greek had come to his senses, and seeing his comrade thus rudely overthrown, he took deliberate aim at the young man, and sent a bullet crashing into his chest.

Mortimer staggered back, beating the air wildly with his hands.

"You scoundrel, you have killed me!" he cried, and then sunk down all in a heap.

The coachman rose to his feet, while the Greek drew near to survey his work.

"Upon my word, Jim, you've settled his hash for this world!" the driver exclaimed.

"If I hadn't, it would have been the Stone Jug up the river for ye. Phat's wan man, more or less? The spalpeen had no call to poke his nose into our affairs. Why didn't he mind his own business, bad 'cess to him! Shure, my head feels as big as a mule's wid the crack he was afther giving me."

"Let's git afore any wan comes."

"The murthuring thafe of the woruld!" the ruffian cried, spurning the body of the actor with his foot; "think of the haul phat we would have made; but if he gits over his hurt he'll know more next time than to interfere wid gintlemen at their work."

"Let's be going," urged the other.

But as they turned, a dark form that had been creeping along in the shadows suddenly sprang forward, grasped the whip that the actor had dropped, and confronted the two.

The coachman, his courage sapped by what had already occurred, took to his heels at once; but the Greek, a bolder ruffian, showed fight.

He tried to discharge the revolver, but the stranger knocked it out of his hands and grappled with him, encircling his throat with fingers that seemed made of steel.

Desperately struggled the Greek, but he could not break the hold of the other, and finally the two came to the earth, closely locked.

CHAPTER XII.

A DESPERATE UNDERTAKING.

It only took a few well-directed blows to smash the window into smithereens, and the noise of the strokes and the falling glass were not noticed by any of the inmates of the Asylum, for the reason that some of the patients in the violent wards were refractory that evening, and their blood-curdling yells and shrieks, accompanied by violent poundings on the floor, drowned all other sounds.

The prisoner had calculated that such would be the case, but he was not sure of it, so he

made haste to get on the outside of his prison-house.

His apartment was on the second story, and to a man as strong and light of limb as he it was an easy task to drop from the window to the ground.

Not a soul took the least notice of his escape, either within or without the building, and the fugitive smiled grimly as he hurried to the water's edge.

He was on the city's side of the island, and it was only a short distance from the building to the water.

The night was not very dark, but as the moon had not yet risen it was not as light as it would be an hour later.

The fugitive paused on the bank and gazed from the stone parapet into the swiftly-flowing tide, and with his eye attempted to measure the distance to the opposite shore.

"It's lucky that I am an excellent swimmer," he murmured, "for I see no way to get across this water except by breasting it as Leander did the Hellespont of old."

Little time was given him for reflection upon this point, for one of the guards whose duty it was to patrol the grounds, happened to catch sight of the fugitive's tall figure looming up, giant-like, in the gloom, and he at once gave the alarm, for, although at first it did not occur to him that the man was one of the prisoners attempting to escape, yet he knew there must be something wrong, for no one had any business there at such an hour.

The moment the fugitive saw he was discovered, without pausing an instant for reflection, he leaped into the water.

Drawing his revolver, and calling loudly for help, the guard hastened to the spot, for he guessed now that the man desperate enough to dare the strength of the rushing tide must be one of the captives panting for liberty, and as the guard was one of the thick-headed kind, there isn't any doubt that he would have emptied his revolver at the fugitive, perfectly willing to kill him rather than allow him to escape, but, luckily for the desperate man, the guard caught his foot against a stone and came down headlong, the shock discharging his revolver, and at the same time sending it spinning out of his hand.

By the time the guard recovered from the shock and gained his feet again, the fugitive, swimming with lusty strokes, despite the fact that he was burdened with all his clothes, but aided by the swift current, had disappeared in the gloom.

The tide was about half-flood, and sweeping along at the rate of four or five miles an hour.

By this time all the officers were on the alert, and when they learned what had transpired, the boat, which is always kept in readiness to pursue any one bold enough to attempt to escape by daring the passage of the turbulent river, was got out and search made for the fugitive.

But this was an operation that took time for its accomplishment at that hour of the night, so that it was fully fifteen minutes from the time the fugitive leaped into the water before the boat set out.

"If he's a good swimmer, and sets out to go straight across, the tide will carry him at least half a mile up-stream," said the officer in command of the boat.

The rest agreed with this, and so, without delay, the boat was headed for the exact spot where, in the nature of things, the swimmer would land.

So correct was the officer in his estimate that when the boat was pulled in to the shore at the point indicated, in the gloom they discovered the fugitive climbing up the steep and rocky bank.

"Come back here and surrender, or we'll riddle you with bullets!" cried the officer, triumphantly, feeling that he had got a sure thing of it.

But little did he know the desperate nature of the man he had brought to bay.

For answer, the fugitive hurled a stone about as big as a man's head down into the boat, and the heavy missile went through the frail plank as though it had been only so much pasteboard, and the next instant the boat's crew were struggling in the water, the craft being instantly wrecked by this novel means.

With an exulting laugh the victor bounded up the rocky bank and disappeared in the darkness.

No pistol-shots followed him, for the crew of the boat had all they could do to gain the bank; but when that was accomplished, and, noses being counted, it was found that all had escaped, pursuit was instantly given.

"I'll hunt the fellow down if it takes me a week!" the officer valorously declared, as he led the way up the steep bank.

Every man of them was dripping wet from the unexpected bath which the device of the fugitive had forced them to take, and as the water was anything but warm, a more angry and disgusted lot of men than the boat's crew would have been hard to find.

Thanks to his bold maneuver, too, the fleeing man had been able to get a good start, for it had taken time for the pursuers to struggle out of the water and gain dry land again.

Then, too, it was doubtful whether their pistols would be good for anything after being submerged in the salt water.

And one of the crew suggested as much to the officer as they ascended the bank.

"Well, I don't suppose that the barkers can do much damage now, but as we are seven to one, and it's pretty certain that he isn't armed, we ought to be able to down him if we can get within striking distance," he replied.

So far the fugitive had the best of it, but as the pursuers believed the man must be exhausted from his long swim, they thought that if they could get upon his track, they could easily run him down.

At the same time they were not as fresh as they might be, for the struggle with the waves when the boat sunk had been an exhausting one.

The fugitive had landed just at the point near the foot of Ninetieth street, and the supposition was reasonable that he would endeavor to escape through the first open street, and in this direction, therefore, the pursuers bent their way, pushing onward at their best speed.

And now the new moon came up above the horizon sufficient to afford them a better light.

They fancied they could discern the figure of the fugitive scampering off as fast as he could straight across the island, and they gave chase with renewed zest.

There was a chance that in his flight he might encounter some policeman who would intercept him, and so, in order to give the alarm, the pursuers every now and then would yell at the top of their voices, but fortune favored the escaped prisoner and not a single officer did he encounter.

Despite the fatigue of his long battle with the waves, and the incumbrance of his wet clothes, he ran "like a greyhound," as the officer at the head of the pursuers observed when he found that, instead of gaining, they were losing ground.

He called upon his men to put forth a little extra exertion, but they had been doing their best, and instead of being able to increase their pace, they could not hold it, but were sensibly slackening in speed.

The unknown—for the Asylum guards hadn't the slightest idea who it was that had escaped in so bold a manner—gained gradually, and at last disappeared within Central Park toward which he had run in a straight line from the beginning.

When the exhausted pursuers arrived at the edge of the park they halted; the prey had disappeared amid the wilderness of shrubbery within, and not the slightest trace of his whereabouts could be discovered.

The guard were terribly angry, but were forced to give up the thing as a bad job, for it would have been as easy a task to find the traditional needle in the traditional load of hay, as to seek in the hours of darkness to find a fugitive who had been able to gain the shelter of the park with five minutes' start.

Grumbling and disgusted, the party took up the homeward march.

And the fugitive?

After gaining the shelter of the trees within the park, he felt sure he could easily dodge his pursuers if they saw fit to keep up the useless chase.

He struck off toward the north, came to one of the traverse roads, which cut the park in twain at regular intervals, built for the use of business wagons, descended into it—the traverse streets are so arranged that they pass under all the regular roads—and did not leave it until he came out on the other side of the park. Then, without hesitation, he kept straight on until he came to the Bloomingdale road, the continuation of Broadway.

He hoped to find some sheltered nook where he could pass the night away, and so it happened that he appeared upon the scene just in the nick of time to come to the rescue of the young actor when Mortimer was struck down by the assassin bullet of the desperado, Jimmy the Greek, for it was this wronged and hunted man who had sprung upon the ruffian and bore him to the ground with a grasp of iron, as detailed at the conclusion of our last chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BARGAIN.

VAINLY the ruffian struggled; the assailant stuck to him like a leech, and the grip upon his throat was so strong that the outlaw felt his strength giving way.

And then, just as his head began to reel and he felt that insensibility would soon ensue, there came to his ears the clatter of a horse's hoofs in the distance.

He realized that the new-comer was far more apt to be a foe than a friend, for was he not a pariah—a man against whom all hands were directed? and therefore he struggled desperately to free himself from the clutch of his assailant, but 'twas all in vain; the grasp upon his throat grew tighter and tighter, a cloud gathered before his eyes, the blood seemed to hiss and bubble in his veins, and then—all was darkness.

He had been choked into insensibility by the

strong-armed foe who had so ruthlessly assailed him.

The victor rose to his feet.

The horseman rode up and reined in his steed, astonished at the unexpected sight which he beheld.

Right in the middle of the road lay the apparently lifeless form of the young actor, and a few feet from him, Jimmy, the Greek, stretched out and looking as dead as a door-nail, while by the side of the prostrate ruffian stood the victor in the struggle, hatless, and with his clothes covered with mud from the road dust in which he had rolled during his brief but desperate struggle with the Greek.

His garments were still wet from the effects of his plunge into the water, and a more disreputable appearance than he presented could not be well imagined.

The horseman took in the situation at a glance; evidently there had been murder done, a triple crime, for there were two prostrate men, neither of whom showed any signs of life; but what struck the new-comer as being extremely strange was the fact that the man who stood in the center of the road, erect in the moonlight, evidently the culprit, did not seem to be in the least afraid, and, manifestly, had no idea of seeking safety in flight.

Out flashed a revolver in the horseman's hand, quickly he cocked the weapon and leveled it at the man who so coolly confronted him.

"Surrender, you scoundrel! don't attempt to offer resistance or I'll put a ball through you!" he cried, sternly.

The horseman was a man of middle age, powerfully built, with a full beard and a countenance denoting great resolution, and from the way in which he spoke it was evident he would be as good as his word.

"Take care, sir, do not be in a hurry," responded the other, not betraying the least sign of fear. "If you should injure me you would be apt to regret it afterward when you ascertain the true facts of the case."

"Well, I think that everything is pretty plain now!" exclaimed the horseman, astonished at the coolness of the fellow. "You have laid out two men, and, probably, would be glad to add me to the party, but I guess you'll have to postpone that operation for awhile."

"You are entirely mistaken, sir!"

"Nonsense!" cried the horseman, impatiently. "I suppose you will try to persuade me next that I ought not to believe the evidence of my own eyes. I saw you struggling with that man," and he pointed to the Greek, "saw you settle him, and then rise to your feet as I came up. The sound of the pistol-shot—evidently fired by you, and which killed this other poor fellow—attracted my attention, and so I urged my horse onward at his best speed, hoping to be in time, if not to prevent murder, at least to arrest the perpetrator of the deed."

"You are wrong, sir, entirely wrong, and the best proof that I am not a guilty man is the fact that I have not attempted to escape, which I could have easily done, but, on the contrary, I waited for you to arrive, so I could call upon you for assistance," replied the unknown. "This man here, whom I was compelled to choke into insensibility," and he pointed to the Greek, "fired the pistol-shot that has, I fear, slain that young man, who was assailed by this ruffian and another scoundrel. I was not in time to prevent the tragedy, and so devoted myself to attempting to secure the author of it. Unfortunately I was weaponless, and so I rushed upon the fellow and grappled with him as soon as possible, thus preventing him from using his weapons. I am pretty muscular, and went for his throat the first thing, and, in spite of his struggles, succeeded in choking him into insensibility: his companion took to his heels as soon as I appeared. If the gentleman yonder is not dead, when he recovers the use of his senses he will tell you that my statement is correct."

The horseman listened attentively to the recital, transfixing the speaker with his piercing eyes as though he would read his very soul, and a better judge of character than the rider never cross-examined a prisoner.

And now he saw, despite the disreputable state of the man's attire, that he was evidently a gentleman, and not one of the prowling ruffians who make the upper wards of the great city so unsafe during the hours of darkness.

Then, for the first time, by the aid of the moon, which had been partially obscured by some passing clouds, the horseman caught sight of the face of the man whom the stranger had handled so roughly.

"Jimmy, the Greek, by all that is wonderful!" he cried.

"Ah, you know the fellow?" and the speaker looked suspiciously at the horseman.

"Yes, I should say I did!" the other replied, in a tone that evinced a deal of satisfaction. "I have been anxious to have the opportunity to say a few words to this rascal, at close quarters, for over a year."

"My dear sir, I don't know who you are, but I am satisfied your story is quite correct, and that I greatly wronged you by my suspicions; but mistakes will happen in the best regulated families, you know. You builded better than

you knew when you tackled this fellow to-night and choked him; you are a thousand dollars in pocket by the operation."

The other appeared astonished by this declaration.

"That rather bothers you, eh?" continued the horseman. "This fellow doesn't look as if he was worth a thousand dollars, alive or dead."

"It might cost a man a thousand dollars to get away from him, if he happened to be unfortunate enough to encounter him alone on a dark night, and no weapons handy," the other remarked.

"You are right about that; he is one of the most notorious scoundrels known to the police, and I have been in hot pursuit of him for a year. He is known among his pals as Jimmy, the Greek, a desperado of the worst type, and reputed to be just as ready to kill a man as to eat his dinner. He's 'wanted' by the police for burglary, accompanied with an assault with intent to kill, and a reward of a thousand dollars has been offered for his capture, which I shall take great pleasure in paying into your hands."

It was evident from this speech that the horseman was a man in authority, and detecting the other's curiosity in his face, he gratified it by announcing:

"I am the superintendent of police here in New York, and do you know that you are just about the kind of a man that I should like to have in my detective force? From the sample of your nerve which I have seen, I feel certain that in time you would be a credit to the department."

"It is the very thing that I crave!" the other answered, with fiery energy. "My life has been wrecked by a very devil in human shape, whom I strongly suspect to be at the head of a band of desperadoes, leagued together to defy the law. For years I have suffered wrongs enough to drive a man to madness."

"By his infernal machinations my once happy home was broken up, my wife and child—my beautiful little girl—torn from me, a foul accusation fastened upon me, and for ten years the inmate of a prison-cell at Sing Sing, an innocent man, but so entangled in a web of doubt by the skill of this arch villain that it was impossible for me to prove my innocence, I have eagerly looked forward to the day when I should be able to wreak my vengeance upon my wronger."

"My sentence expired and I was released from prison. I hastened to New York, and on my very first night in the city I was assaulted, and left for dead by ruffians who I am sure were connected with my enemy's gang."

"What is the man's name?"

"I cannot tell you that—I should not even know him if we came face to face, but from certain facts that came to my knowledge while I was up the river—for I was careful to hold my tongue, and so allow my fellow-prisoners to believe that I was as bad as they—I feel certain that my foe and the arch scoundrel who is called by the 'crooked' men the Romany Rye are one and the same."

"I know who you mean, although I have never been lucky enough to have a personal interview with this Gypsy Gentleman," responded the superintendent, who had listened with the utmost interest to the other's story. "But I live in hopes to lay him by the heels one of these days. I am satisfied from what I have ascertained that he is at the head of the largest and best organized band of scoundrels that ever attempted to defy the power of the law. Join my detective force and I will place in your hands weapons that will enable you some day to overcome this master-thief. I plainly perceive from your exploit to-night that you are exactly the man I want. I will arrange it so that your connection with the force shall not be suspected by any one, and yet I will support you with every man under my command, so that your blows will fall upon this secret band like the strokes of an invisible hand."

"I accept the offer, and I will give my life to the task. I'll hunt the scoundrels so untiringly that they will think that a demon is on their path!"

"Exactly—a Demon Detective, and you fill the bill, for I take it that you are a hard man to kill; what is your name?"

"Nick Fox."

CHAPTER XIV.

A WONDERFUL ESCAPE.

"WHY, that's an odd name."

"It is not a common one, and on that fact I build the hope that I shall one day succeed in discovering my child—my star-eyed daughter—whom this villain stole from me. Wife and child were both lost, and while I was in prison I heard through the secret channel by means of which news of all that goes on in the world without reaches the criminals, that my wife had died."

"Too late she repented of the madness which had led her to forsake home, husband and honor to fly with the polished aristocrat—the millionaire who had become fascinated by her beauty—but who turned out to be nothing more than a common swindler."

"When the scales dropped from her eyes, the discovery killed her. She was a weak, foolish

thing, educated to believe that money was everything in this world."

"When the web was woven around me and I was hurried to the cell of a prisoner, disgraced and ruined, and she was left to fight the world with her child—to face penury and want, her courage forsook her; the burden was too great for her weak strength and she did not attempt to bear up under it but yielded to the blandishments of the tempter."

"Her sin was great—the punishment great also, for when the discovery came that she had forsaken the path of honor for the sake of an adventurer for whom the doors of half the jails in the country yawned wide, it killed her."

"By Jove, sir, if you do not hunt this fellow down it is because you have no blood in your veins!" the superintendent exclaimed, touched by the affecting story.

"My blood is turned to fire sometimes when I think of my wrongs," the other replied. "Is it any wonder that I am transformed from a man into a demon? I have become reckless, like to-night when I grappled this fellow with my bare hands, never thinking, or caring, whether he had a knife or not. I am not boasting when I say, that if I could discover the secret haunt of this Romany Rye I would be willing to go in single-handed and drag him out from the midst of his gang."

"You're just the man I'm looking for! One man of your kidney, who doesn't care whether he gets killed or not, is worth a dozen fellows who pause to count the odds and calculate the chances before they go in to grab their man. But your daughter—you see I am interested in your story—is she dead?"

A deep sigh came from the lips of Fox.

"Ah, sir, I cannot tell; not the slightest bit of information in regard to her have I been able to obtain since the day the prison doors closed upon me. She was then only a wee little thing; now she would be a girl of sixteen. Jennie was her name, Jennie Fox, and the horrible thought will come to me sometimes that, as there isn't any doubt she accompanied her mother when she fled with this wily scoundrel, she may be now with him, his willing accomplice, steeped in guilt, and that in hunting him down I shall also sacrifice my child."

"That is a terrible thought," observed the chief.

"Yes, but I shall go straight onward to my goal notwithstanding. In my desire for vengeance I have become a monomaniac; in fact, I have just escaped from a Lunatic Asylum," and then he related to the chief the strange peril through which he had lately passed.

The superintendent listened with the utmost attention, watching the face of the speaker with the earnest gaze that had so often brought confusion to wily scoundrels who had attempted by specious tales to confuse the judgment of Justice.

"Upon my word! if I hadn't been pretty well used to all sorts of rascality, I could hardly believe such a thing could be possible!" the chief exclaimed.

"But you do believe it—you do not doubt my tale?"

"Oh, no; I fancy I have sat too long in an official chair, and weighed too much evidence in my mind not to be able to give a pretty good guess in regard to whether a man is speaking truth or falsehood. Your story is really astounding; it ought not to be possible that such a thing could have occurred right here in New York but that is just where the old saying comes in, 'Truth is stranger than fiction.' I think I know this old doctor, or at any rate your description exactly suits a man, whom I have been anxious to put in durance vile ever since I have been connected with the police department. But I don't precisely understand why the old fellow should take so much trouble to get you out of the way," the official observed, thoughtfully. "Of course if you had been so inclined you might have made trouble for him about the body-snatching business."

"Oh, no, I do not think it possible that that could have had anything to do with the matter. I was only too thankful that I had so narrowly escaped from being buried alive, and so expressed myself. The man had no cause for fear on that score."

"But he surely would not have adopted such a desperate measure without good and sufficient reasons."

"I have been puzzling my brains over the matter ever since I found myself in captivity. The brandy that the doctor gave me to drink was evidently drugged, and drugged for a purpose, so that while I was insensible I might be conveyed to the Asylum. There was a doctor concerned in the plot which sent me, an innocent man, to the State Prison. I never saw the man, but there were certain circumstances connected with the affair so that I thought I would be able to trace and hold him to a strict account for his share in the crime. I have a vague remembrance that in my weak state I was foolish enough to make a statement to that effect—"

"I see, I see!" exclaimed the chief, "and you were in the hands of the very man whom you

desired to punish. The old doctor was the doctor you sought."

"That is my impression, and the more I reflect upon the matter, the more I feel convinced it is correct. Accident had brought me into the hands of the very man whom I designed to hunt down and punish for the part he took in the conspiracy that blighted my life."

"The odds are a hundred to one that the surmise is correct; it was a bold game and well played, but, if the old rascal hasn't given leg-bail, I feel sure I can put my hands on him when we weave the web of proof around him."

"And through him may we not reach the master-spirit, the arch-scoundrel who has for so long a time successfully defied the power of the law?"

"That is a good idea, and I haven't the least doubt that the scheme can be worked!"

A movement on the part of the young actor, at this moment interrupted the conversation.

"He's not dead!" exclaimed the chief, dismounting from his steed and approaching Mortimer while the other knelt by the side of the fallen ruffian, to ascertain his condition.

As the superintendent came up to the actor, he rose to a sitting posture and looked around him in a bewildered manner.

The superintendent recognized him immediately, as the official often whiled away an idle hour at the theater.

"Hallo, why, Mr. Mortimer, you are about the last man I expected to see; although I suppose it isn't anything wonderful that a gentleman in your line of business should take part in a tragedy?"

"A leading role too, so I suppose I have no right to complain," the actor replied, rising to his feet, much to the astonishment of the chief, who had supposed him to be badly hurt.

"But, I say, sir, you have the advantage of me," Mortimer continued.

"It is my business to know a little about everybody," the official exclaimed. "I am the superintendent of police and have often witnessed your performances, but I will venture to say that in all your life you never encountered a greater peril even in the mimic experience of the drama than the one you met to-night."

"You are quite right there, sir. Egad! I thought I was done for as far as this world is concerned, for I felt the ball strike me full in the breast and then I fainted from the shock. I ought to be deuced badly wounded somewhere, and I don't exactly understand how it is, for I don't feel as if I had received a scratch."

"A really miraculous escape, but the ball probably encountered some obstacle."

"By Jove! I never thought of it before!" Mortimer exclaimed. "I've a large pocket-book in the breast pocket of my coat with my week's salary in it, two hundred dollars, and it is all in small bills, so it is quite a bulky affair," and as he spoke he opened his coat and made an examination.

His guess was correct; imbedded in the bank-bills was the revolver-bullet, which, but for the timely obstacle, most certainly would have robbed the young man of life.

"How did this affair happen?" asked the chief. Mortimer explained, merely suppressing the name of the lady, for he did not think that it was necessary to mention it.

And it is on such trifles as this that life turns. "I know Dublin Pat, and I only wish I had been lucky enough to have secured him along with his pal," the superintendent observed.

By this time a policeman, who had been attracted by the pistol-shot, made his appearance, and was not much surprised upon beholding his chief, for the superintendent was one of those active men who are liable to make their appearance when least expected.

Handcuffs were placed upon the ruffian, and by the time this operation was completed he had recovered his senses, and great was his rage when he found he was a prisoner.

"I'll be even with you for this!" he cried to Fox. "The next time I meet you, look out!"

"The next time we meet, you, too, look out, for I will most surely kill you!" the other replied.

And Jimmy, the Greek, the hardened ruffian, the hero of a hundred crimes, fairly quailed before the demon-like glare which shone in the eyes of the man-hunter.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH.

AND NOW turn we the wheels of old Father Time's chariot onward for a month.

During that time many of the principal personages in our story had been busy, and much had occurred to affect their fortunes.

The ruffian, Jimmy, the Greek, had been brought to trial and promptly convicted, although his pals had used their best efforts to save him. Money had been spent like water, the best criminal lawyers in the city were employed, and when it became apparent that the evidence was too strong to be weakened by any ingenious legal dust-throwing to blind the eyes of the twelve "good men and true," who sat in judgment, an endeavor was made to "square" the judge, and "hang" the jury.

But the judge, being a square man, was not to be "squared" or influenced in any way, and

the jury, being an unusually good one, did not possess a man bold enough to bid defiance to public opinion by standing out against his fellows, and so a verdict was speedily reached, and the Greek received the severe sentence of ten years in State Prison, and never was a punishment more richly deserved.

The superintendent of police had watched the trial with eager interest.

He was convinced, from the extra exertion put forth to save the ruffian from the consequences of his crime, that in Jimmy, the Greek, he had laid hold of one of the principal members of the secret band which owned the Romany Rye as its chief, and he put forth his best efforts to get at the men who had employed the lawyer to defend the ruffian, thinking that if he could ascertain who they were, he would have a clew to the master-spirits of the criminal league.

It was a strange fact that, although for five or six years the chief had known of the existence of the Gypsy Gentleman—had been aware that he was at the head of a gang formed for the express purpose of bidding defiance to the authorities, he had never been able to get at him in any way.

The principal reason for this was, probably, because the Romany Rye never ventured his precious person, but put his tools forward to do the jobs his cunning brain devised.

Another strange fact.

Twenty times at least the chief had been sure that some rogue who had been caught in the stern meshes of the law, was one of the secret band, and he had done his best to get the fellow to betray his pals.

The rascals who make a living by preying upon the public are ready enough, as a rule, to betray their best friends, if they think they can escape punishment by so doing, but the men who served the Gypsy Gentleman were proof against this weakness, and one and all of the scoundrels, whom the chief suspected, stuck stoutly to the story that they not only did not belong to a secret organization, but they had never even heard of such a person as the Romany Rye.

The superintendent had been greatly annoyed at his failure to get at the truth, for from revelations that had been made by criminals who had sought to obtain his good offices, by telling all they knew, men who were not members of the gang, but knew that there was such a thing, he was satisfied the Gypsy Gentleman and his secret band really existed.

But now that he had obtained the services of the man with the seared heart and the blasted life, he hoped that the screen of lies behind which the Romany Rye had found shelter would be demolished.

The official had gone to work in the shrewdest manner.

Convinced that the secret band had agents and friends in quarters where they were least likely to be suspected—suspecting too that his own headquarters was not free from them, he arranged matters so that no one but himself knew that Nick Fox had been enlisted to hunt the scoundrels down.

If no one knew of the matter but himself it was clearly impossible for the secret to be revealed and the rascal band warned of the bloodhound who was on their track.

A place of meeting had been arranged so that the secret agent could report to the chief at any time without any one being aware of the fact, but during the month the spy had little progress to report, although in disguise he was a frequent visitor to all the low haunts in the metropolis, where the dangerous classes of the big city were to be found.

The superintendent too, acting upon the clew given him by the young actor, had caused diligent search to be made for Dublin Pat, endeavoring to discover how it was that he had come to be playing the part of a coachman.

The search was a failure, not the least bit of information was gained, and the Greek, when questioned upon the subject, declared promptly that he knew no such person, and while passing along the street, peaceably attending to his own business, he had been assaulted by Mortimer, whom he declared to be under the influence of liquor, and persisted in the statement that he had merely defended himself when assailed.

No charge was made against the ruffian on account of this crime, for the actor was averse to appearing in the matter, on account of his unknown beauty. There was a mystery about the girl, and Mortimer felt a strong repugnance—for which he could not at all account—to dragging her into the vivid light which beats upon a police court.

Besides, the Greek was "wanted" upon an even more serious charge, and as the evidence was complete and the chance of conviction about as sure as anything can be in this uncertain world, all parties concerned were willing not to press the matter.

The actor had been doing a little detective business on his own account, assisted by the friendly hackman, who had aided him to defeat the scoundrels in their design upon the lady.

The two made the most diligent search possi-

ble for the coupe and horse used by Dublin Pat on the night when the odd adventure had occurred.

If the carriage and horse were found, being a private establishment, a clew to the lady would undoubtedly be gained.

So careful inquiries were made in the neighborhood extending from the scene of the adventure clear to Spayten Duyvel creek, but to the disappointment of the searchers not the slightest trace could they discover of either vehicle, horse, coachman or lady.

All had disappeared, and left as little evidence behind that they had ever existed, as though they had come out of the earth and gone into it again.

"It's the rummest go that ever I heered on!" the hackman declared, when Mortimer came to the conclusion that further search was useless and paid him off.

The mystery deepened, but Mortimer was resolved to persevere. He knew her name, Jennie Fox, and so he inserted a carefully-worded advertisement in the personal column of a leading daily newspaper; it read:

"To Miss J. F. The gentleman who was fortunate enough to be of service to you, a few evenings ago, on the Bloomingdale road, is anxious to know if you reached your home in safety. A line addressed to H. M., care of the Sturtevant House, will be highly appreciated."

For a week he kept the advertisement in the newspaper, but was not lucky enough to be favored with an answer.

It was very strange, to say the least, and Mortimer, who had been affected by the young girl as he never had by any other woman, was greatly disappointed.

At the theater he shared his dressing-room with an old actor, one of the veterans of the stage, George Davenport by name.

The two were intimate friends and had been so for years, despite the difference in their ages. The young actor had been left an orphan at an early age, and having no immediate relatives had been obliged to look out for himself, which he managed to do without any trouble, for, being a smart, bright boy, he easily made friends.

He had adopted the stage as a profession at the age of sixteen, quitting the store where he had gained a living ever since the death of his parents.

Right at the first of his professional career he had encountered Davenport. The old actor took a fancy to the bright, intelligent lad, detected the latent talent he possessed for the profession he had chosen, and with many a sagacious hint helped to smooth the rough road that leads to the temple of fame.

In Davenport then Mortimer confided.

The old actor shook his head, and frankly admitted that he feared there was something wrong about the matter.

"The idea of a young girl, such as you describe, being abroad, alone and unattended, at that late hour, poorly dressed, yet evidently a lady and with a large amount of valuables upon her person, is extremely strange, and then your not being able after a careful search to discover anything about her—doesn't it seem to you as if—to use the thieves' argot—there was something 'crooked' about the girl?"

"And she appeared to be purity and innocence itself!"

"Things are not always what they seem; skim milk masquerades as cream."

responded the veteran, quoting from much-abused "Pinafore." "My dear Harry, I hope for your sake the lady is all right and that you will be able to find out who she is, but I really fear she is a siren whose acquaintance will bring no good to you."

"I cannot bring myself to look upon her in that light!" the young actor declared. "I am confident she is all that is pure and good, and I am determined to discover her, no matter how long it takes me, nor how arduous the toil."

The veteran laughed; there wasn't any use in trying to reason with such a lover.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE THIEVES' DEN.

IN Houston street, near Broadway, is a block of buildings well known to the police and commonly called Murderer's Row.

Really the whole neighborhood, for four or five streets, bears the most unsavory reputation.

Saloons abound, many of them well known to be dens of the worst class, and although the Police Headquarters in Mulberry street is only a short distance, yet vice and crime seem to flourish in this rascal-haunted quarter as if there was no such thing as a police-officer within a mile.

It is the old saying, "Satan and his imps thrive best in the shadow of the church."

The saying was surely a true one in this instance, for nowhere in all the big metropolis can there be found more scoundrels, for whom the law is always reaching, than in this very quarter.

The police might perhaps attempt to explain why the cancer-sores on civilization are permitted to exist, when by rights the strong hand

of power ought to have stamped them out long ago, by stating that they are "rat-traps."

That is, when one of the criminal classes was "wanted" for any offense, by keeping an eye upon these haunts of evil reputation sooner or later the party could be caught there.

One of the most notorious of these rat-traps is quite a modest-looking saloon, in outward appearance, compared to its more queenly and more honest neighbors.

It was kept by a foreigner from over the ocean who was commonly believed to have "done time" in more prisons in England and on the continent of Europe than he had fingers and toes.

"Old Pop Betterkin" he was generally termed, a broad-shouldered, burly man, with a face as hard as if it had been cut out of a pine knot.

He was living on the "square," as he protested with many an oath whenever he came in contact with any of the police officials; no longer was he a "cross cove." In the thieves' argot, as the peculiar language used by rascals all over the world is called, to be on the square is to be honest, while a "cross cove" is the individual who thrives by helping himself to property without going through the ceremony of paying for it.

This statement was not credited by the police, for although they were willing to believe that the old man did not take any active part in schemes of plunder, yet they were fully satisfied he was the prime mover in some of the biggest jobs that had ever been executed in the country.

His saloon was a "house of call," to use the English term, for all the cross coves who prided themselves upon being at the head of their "profession," the big guns who hunted for big game only.

It is night, and the saloon was well filled with customers, some drinking at the bar and others enjoying a social glass seated at the tables which were placed at the rear end of the apartment, and a few were playing cards.

It was a jovial, well-behaved throng, and a stranger, happening to stroll into the room, would never have suspected that there was hardly a man there who did not belong to the vast army of rascals who thrive upon the pillage of honest folks.

And nearly all those in the saloon who were not really criminals themselves were friends or relatives of the cross coves, or else novices who aspired to tread the path of crime, and frequented this place to receive instruction from the old hands, who could boast of having graduated at Newgate, Toulon, Sing Sing, or some other prominent prison.

All of a sudden a hush came over the room; the card-players paused in their game, mugs of beer were set down untasted, the inmates looking at each other with an anxious expression upon their faces, and more than one pair of eyes glanced furtively at the door and window in the rear wall of the apartment, as though calculating upon making a dash for the open air in that direction.

The reader might imagine that a squad of police had made their appearance in the doorway, but it was not so; only a single man had entered.

A quiet-looking gentleman, dressed neatly in a dark business-suit, about the medium size, and without anything at all about him to attract attention in a crowd, except that a good judge of mankind might suspect from his face that he was possessed of uncommon resolution and nerve.

He came in quietly, closed the door noiselessly behind him, and then took a good look at the inmates of the saloon.

But somehow there wasn't a man in the place that did not seem conscious of his presence the moment he made his appearance; it was as if a wave of icy wind had swept in upon them and chilled all to silence.

No wonder, for this unassuming gentleman was Captain Byrne, the detective, a "party" well known to all the cross coves present, and there wasn't one of them but what trembled the moment the detective was recognized, for fear that the "fly cop" came on business, and he was the man that was "wanted."

But after a searching glance around, the detective walked up to the bar, and every soul in the place breathed easier.

"How'y' do—how are you?" exclaimed the old man, in the most cordial manner, beaming upon the detective as if he was the nearest and dearest friend he had in the world, although the officer knew full well that the host would be only too glad to "lay him out," cold and stiff, if he had a chance to do the job without detection.

"Pretty well; how's trade?"

"Oh, middling; not what it ought to be, you know; but what will you take?"

"Not anything, thank you; I only dropped in to see how you were getting on."

"You're as welcome as the flowers in May!" observed the old scoundrel, who was well educated and could behave like a gentleman when he chose. "But you really ought to take something. Come, give it a name! Just wet your

whistle with a little something for the good of the house. You haven't come on business this time, have you?" and the old fellow leaned over the counter, and whispered insinuatingly to the detective.

"Well, a little on business."

"Not anything that concerns me, Captain Byrne, I'm sure," the host remarked, a trifle nervous. "I'm on the square now, you know; wish I may die if I ain't! square as they make 'em! Of course I keep a public place, and I can't refuse to take a man's money and set out the 'lush' for him so long as he behaves himself quietly and like a gentleman."

"You're all hunk this time, old man; but if you are not careful, I will get you dead to rights one of these days," the detective warned.

"Oh, no; no chance for that. I tell you I'm giving it to you straight—wish I may never draw my breath again if I ain't! Just going along in my little hanky-panky way—wouldn't touch the biggest boodle that the boys could bring in. Of course I know a few of the coves are on the cross and put up a job once in a while," and here his manner became very confidential, "but I give you my word they know better than to let me know anything about it, for I have warned them over and over again, 'Stow' the cross, or you'll have the 'darbies' on your wrists and be locked up in 'quod' afore you can say Jack Robinson!"

"Oh, you're an innocent lamb, you are!" remarked the detective, with an incredulous shake of the head.

"Wish I may die if I ain't, now!" the host declared. "Of course, with such a man as you, Captain Byrne, 'tain't no use for a bloke like me for to pretend that I have never been on the cross, but it's all over now, bless your soul! I've done all the time that I am ever going to do. I try the best I know how to give the cold shoulder to any of the 'cracksmen' that come into my place here, too. I tell 'em that I don't want 'em here—that their room is a deal sight better than their company—that their money is no good, if it's going to get the cops down on me, but of course I can't turn 'em out as long as they behave themselves."

"Of course not, and it's quite a handy thing for gentlemen in my line of business, for if we want a man we don't have to hunt all over town after him, when we can come right in here and pull him out."

Despite his desire to appear in the best possible light, the old fellow could not help making a grimace as he listened to the officer's remark, for he knew how true it was. Many a note in the "swell mob" ranks had had the handcuffs snapped upon his wrists in that very saloon and been led away, like a lamb to the slaughter, to the tune of rattling darbies, as the thieves always term the handcuffs.

"But who is it now, Captain Byrne? Who is it that you are after? None of my friends, I hope?"

"Oh, yes; an old pal of yours."

"That's too bad; really my heart bleeds for him!" and the old rascal shook his head and showed the whites of his eyes in a doleful manner.

"Jimmy, the Greek."

"Eh?" and the keeper of the saloon stared.

"He's the man I want."

"Oh, you're all wrong; he's up at Sing Sing—up for ten years, too! Don't you remember how he was sent up about a month ago? Poor Jimmy! he would do it, he would go wrong; but he was a good fellow, easily led away, that's all."

"He escaped from Sing Sing prison last night."

"You 't say so!"

"Fact: you knew of it, of course."

"Wish I may die if I did!"

And just at this point a man came lounging into the saloon, who immediately attracted general attention.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SECRET SIGN.

THE new-comer was a good-sized fellow, all muffled up in a heavy pea-jacket, with a rough scarf wound round his neck, and an imitation fur cap, much worse for wear, pulled down over his eyes, just as if he was cold, and was protecting himself against the weather; but as the night was genial one, the natural supposition arose that the stranger had adopted these precautions as a disguise.

The face of the man was not a prepossessing one; for there was a hang-dog look about it which would have been apt to put even an innocent-minded man upon his guard.

The complexion was a dirty yellow, the eyes furtive in their expression, the lids half closed, only allowing a part of the eyes to be seen. The upper lip and chin smoothly shaven, yet showing the stubble of a heavy beard, while under the chin was a heavy growth of hair, after the fashion common to some sons of Albion and Erin, which gave an apish expression to the face.

Altogether the fellow looked like a cockney brute of the first water.

He came stealthily into the saloon, and before he closed the door took a good look around.

With most men the reasonable supposition for the action would be that the new-comer expected to meet a friend, and was inspecting the company present to see if the party was there, but this fellow acted so queerly that it was plain he was not looking for a friend, but feared to see a foe.

And when his gaze encountered that of the detective officer, who surveyed him with one of his keen, sharp glances, he looked confused, and for a moment it seemed as if he had determined to retreat; but a moment's reflection evidently convinced him of the folly of such a movement, for if the detective officer was the man he feared to encounter, a retrograde march would only result in exciting the officer's suspicions, so he lounged up to the counter.

The host had taken his measure at the first glance; a London cracksmen, a cross cove of the first degree, who had left his country for his country's good; a stranger who had not been long in this country, and who had, probably, been instructed by some old professional, who knew the ropes, to come to the saloon with the idea of meeting friends who could put him on a good "lay."

"I say, do yer know where I can find a beastly bloke w'ot calls 'imself William 'Arris?" the stranger asked, speaking with a strong English accent.

"William Harris?" remarked the saloon-keeper, reflectively; "no, I don't think I know him. No party by that name ever hangs out 'round here."

"I think I know a man by that name," the detective observed, leaning his elbows on the table, and surveying the stranger with a piercing glance, which evidently he did not relish. "A little, short, thick-set fellow, with a black beard?"

"Oh, no, nothing of the kind; he's a slender cove w'ot don't wear no beard."

"Well, let me see; maybe I know another William Harris—the name seems familiar to me." And all the time the detective was studying the features of the stranger intently.

The saloon-keeper understood the game of the officer.

He suspected that the man was some noted criminal in disguise, and was keeping up the conversation in the hope that he would be able to detect who he was; but the host was sure the detective would not succeed in his endeavor, for he was satisfied the fellow was a newly-arrived cracksmen.

"The bloke w'ot I means is tall and thin, and 'e's a locksmith by trade," volunteered the stranger.

"I don't think I know him, then, but, I say, what might your name be?" asked the officer.

"Vell, it might be Jones, but it ain't," replied the man, with a grin.

"Oh, come! none of that, no funny business, you know. I'm not the kind of man to monkey with. I think I know you!" The voice of the detective became stern, and he fixed such a searching glance upon the man that he became visibly uneasy.

"Vell, if you do, you've got a big sight the advantage of me, that's all I've got to say, for I'll take my 'davy I never see'd you afore."

"Your name is Jimmy—"

Half the men in the room held their breath as the detective paused. Was it possible that this was the notorious Greek in disguise, and the bloodhound of the law had detected him through his disguise?

The host knew better; the stranger was a taller man than the felon, and not so thick-set, besides the cast of his features was entirely different.

"Oh, no, it ain't, so help me Bob!" the man protested. "My name is Dick—Dick Sharp."

"He ain't the man you take him to be, at all!" exclaimed the saloon-keeper. "Just look at his hands! he's got a delicate paw 'side the other fellow."

This was true, for the hands of the Greek were noted for their size, and the detective at a glance saw that his surmise was incorrect.

"Oh, I was only joking," he replied, with a laugh, and, at this admission, the rest drew a long breath, indicative of relief, for many of them had jumped to the conclusion that the detective had made a shrewd guess at the truth, and the stranger was no other than Jimmy, the Greek, cleverly disguised.

"Well, I'll see you again, so-long," remarked the officer, and then he sauntered out of the saloon, much to the satisfaction of all present.

"Who in blazes is 'e, anyway?" growled the stranger, gazing after the detective with a look of surly anger upon his face.

"He's a detective officer, and an ugly man to run against, now I tell you!" the saloon-keeper replied.

"A detective! wouldn't I like to slit 'is weasand for 'im," muttered the man in an undertone, but loud enough to reach the host's ears.

"You had better be careful how you talk, or you may get into trouble," continued the other.

"I ain't afraid of that. I'm as 'fly' as they make 'em. But I say, you can draw me a glass o' beer," and the man tossed a silver piece on the counter, making it spin in a peculiar manner.

The host gave a short, quick stare at the man, drew the beer and placed it upon the counter, then threw a careless glance around the saloon to see if any of the inmates were watching.

But with the departure of the detective, all had resumed their former occupations, the incubus of his presence being removed; the drinking, card-playing and conversation went on without any one paying particular attention to the two at the bar.

Perceiving this, old Betterkin remarked:

"That was a clever little trick of yours, my lad."

"Never seed it afore, eh?" and the stranger chuckled, hoarsely, then took a good pull at the beer.

"Well, mebbe I have and mebbe I haven't," the other remarked, evasively.

"I'll go you a pund to a shillin' that you've seed it done a hundred times!"

"You're a kind of a cheeky customer! How do you know wot I've seen and wot I haven't seen?"

"Oh, I don't make so bold as that, you know, but when a cove is up to snuff, you can't throw dust in 'is peepers." And then the speaker closed one of his eyes and winked the other in a very mysterious way.

"Where did you learn to do the trick?"

"In quod."

"Jail, eh?"

"That's the werry hidentical place."

"Across the water?"

"No; hout Boston way."

"Oh, you've been in trouble here, then?"

"Bless yer hyes! I was 'lagged' the werry first night I landed," the man replied, with a grin. "I was halways a terrier fer getting in my work; I got hoff the blooming ship in the morning and I cracked a crib that night, but just as I was a-gitting hout, safe and sound, with the swag, I'm blessed if I didn't run binter two blooming bobbies and they downed me afore I could get my tools hout for to 'ave a crack at 'em, and I got a year for the blarsted smash, too, you know."

"And did you learn how to spin that coin in the prison at Charlestown?"

"The werry hidentical place."

"Well, that's an odd trick to pick up, anyhow," the old man remarked, with a sideways glance at the customer.

"Vell, it is now, and vot the cove told me as taught me 'ow to do the trick is hodder still."

"Who was he—his name?" demanded Betterkin, abruptly.

"Red Barry, in for twenty years, cotched right in the crib, you know, and smashed a couple of the blooming peelers afore he was downed."

"A good man—as good a workman as ever took a trick!"

"'E said, seeing as 'ow I was a stranger, 'e would put me up to the time 'o day."

"And did he say anything about me?" asked the old man, eagerly.

"You bet yer blooming life 'e did! 'E says to me, says 'e, Old Pop Betterkin will put you onto a good lay. All ye 'ave to do is to walk into 'is 'boozing-den,' ax for a glass o' beer and spin the silver in this hanky-panky way—same as I did, guv'ner, and when 'e axes yer wot ye're up to, just mention my name and say you'd like to join the Romany Rye gang."

"And what would you say if you happen to have the luck to run ag'in' the Gypsy Gentleman?"

"I'm yer man, bold Captain Strike, for life or death!"

The host nodded, the password had been correctly given, and all his doubts vanished.

"You've come to the right shop," Betterkin remarked, "and you're just the man that's wanted. Are you ready for work?"

"The quicker the better; I'm fly to anythink!"

CHAPTER XVIII. AN AGREEMENT.

THE new-comer had been sipping his beer at intervals during the conversation, and as it had been carried on in a low tone and in such a careless manner that no one would be apt to suspect the talk was of any importance, the inmates of the room, after the first scrutinizing stare, paid no more attention to the man.

The host was suspicious by nature, and long experience had taught him that very little reliance could be placed upon the average rogue; five out of ten would be apt to "peach" upon their pals, if nipped by the iron hand of the law and they thought their own personal safety could be secured by betraying their accomplices.

So, the moment old Betterkin came to the conclusion the stranger might be made useful and it would be wise to introduce him to the secret band, he kept a watch upon his customers to see if any of them were paying attention to the conversation between himself and the Englishman. But as each and every man seemed to be strictly attending to his own business, the host came to the conclusion that it would be perfectly safe to give the "office" to use the slang saying, to the stranger.

"Yes, sir, I'm as game as a pebble, and ripe

for hanythink!" the Englishman exclaimed, as he finished the rest of his beer.

"Take a walk and come back here arter twelve o'clock to-night. I close up prompt at twelve; that's according to law, you know, and as the cops keep a sharp watch on me I'm very careful not to give them a chance to catch me napping in any way, for they'll pull the place in a minute if they have half an excuse for it."

"You come back arter twelve. You'll find the saloon all shut up, but there's private door to the right; you come there and just tap on it twice, wait a minute and then rap three times, so that I will know that it is you and I'll let you in."

"All right, guv'ner, I'll be on time, and I'm obligated to you for putting me in the way of getting hat a good job."

Then he ducked his head in salutation, and sauntered out.

The host gazed after him for a moment, a thoughtful expression upon his face.

"Is he all right?" he muttered. "Isn't it a plant for to trap the gang? There's no telling what dodges the peelers are up to, nowadays. I had better put a man on him, so as to be sure. Johnny!" he exclaimed.

A little, dried-up-looking fellow, with a shrewd, though evil-looking face, who, in a chair tilted back against the wall, was dozing in a corner of the room, immediately came forward.

No stranger this boy-like man to the police; young in years, but old in crime, Johnny, commonly called the Mouse, from his stealthy ways, was in police circles reputed to be one of the most expert knocks—as, in thieves argot, the pickpockets are termed—in the country.

"Did you notice that fellow that just went out?" the old man asked, speaking in a cautious tone, so that no one but the Mouse could hear what he said.

"Oh, yes, I got onto him, pop."

"What do you think of him?"

"He looks like a reg'lar out and outer."

"He claims to be true blue, but I have my doubts. He may be got up to run some of the boys in, you know. He's coming back to see me to-night for to talk over a little business. Now, I want you to follow him, Johnny, and don't lose sight of him until he comes back here. If it is a plant; and he puts himself in communication with the police, I reckon you'll be smart enough to twig the operation?"

"Well, I should smile!" responded the other, with a knowing wink. "I'll pipe him off like his shadow!"

"And, Johnny, if you find out that it is a plant, come back immediately and report. Don't lose a minute, you know, arter you catch him with the police."

"All right! I'm fly as a bird."

And the Mouse instantly departed.

When he gained the street he halted for a moment, eager to catch sight of his man, for he was afraid that, in the interval which had elapsed since the stranger left the saloon, the other might have got out of the way.

Luckily, however, the man had no distinctive purpose in view, except to kill time, until the midnight hour should come, and so he was lounging at the corner of the street, listening to an altercation between two drunken fellows which threatened to develop into a personal encounter, but bystanders interfered, the crowd dispersed, and the Englishman sauntered listlessly onward toward Broadway.

The main artery reached, he turned and followed the great street of the metropolis until he came to Union Square.

Crossing the Square to the park, he sat down upon one of the benches by the fountain.

Never had spy an easier task, for the Mouse followed the stranger without the slightest difficulty.

The man, evidently, had not the least suspicion that his movements were watched, for he never took the trouble to turn his head, but sauntered on in his careless way, indifferent to all the surroundings.

When he took a seat in the park, the suspicions of the spy were at once excited. He jumped instantly to the conclusion that this was done to allow some one to communicate with him, and so, selecting a spot on a bench a short distance away, the Mouse pretended to fall half-asleep, like the majority of the tramps, bums and unfortunate homeless men who filled the benches, but all the time he kept a wary eye upon his game.

It was impossible for any one, even in the most guarded manner, to communicate with the other without the spy being aware of the fact.

It wanted a good two hours to midnight when the two made their appearance in the park, and until the hour of twelve sounded from the city clocks the Mouse did not lose a movement of the Englishman, but as far as he could see, the man did not communicate with any one, nor any one with him, either by word or signal, although at two separate times when a couple of detectives in plain clothes strolled through the park, casting searching glances at the tenants of the benches, the Mouse felt certain that he was on the eve of a discovery, but

neither of the detectives took any more notice of the Englishman than they did of the rest of the loungers, although the spy was on the alert to discover some sign of intelligence.

"I guess he's all correct," the Mouse muttered, as the Englishman rose to his feet after the clocks announced the midnight hour and began to retrace his steps.

The spy steadily followed him, but the second trip was as fruitless of results as the first.

Not a single sign was there to indicate that the man was other than he seemed.

It was about twenty minutes after twelve when the man arrived at the saloon, and it was tightly closed, as Betterkin had stated it would be.

The Englishman gave a cautious look around and then tapped twice on the door. The caution he displayed was more the result of habit than the fear that he was watched.

But the Mouse, on the opposite side of the street, skulking in the shadow of a doorway, had his eyes upon him.

The Englishman paused for a moment and then knocked again, giving three separate raps as he had been instructed.

The door opened and old Betterkin appeared.

"Right up to time, ain't ye?" he exclaimed. "Step in and wait a minute; I want to take a look and see if there is any prowling peelers around the neighborhood."

"I threw my peepers about afore I knocked, but I didn't spot hanythink," the other remarked.

"I'm better used to the locality than you are," responded the host, who had put on his hat. "So you just step inside while I take a look about."

"All right!"

The Englishman entered.

"Just stay in the entryway, I will not be long," Betterkin remarked, then he stepped outside and closed the door after him, leaving the Englishman in the darkness of the entry.

The Mouse came across the street the moment he saw the coast was clear.

"What do you make of him?" the saloon-keeper asked.

"All correct, guv'ner, as far as I kin see," the spy replied. "He walked up to Union Square and sat down in the park until twelve o'clock came."

"And no police spies 'round him, hey?"

"There was a couple of detectives passed, but they didn't take no notice of him nor he of them."

"No sly signal as much as to say, 'it's all right—I'm working the trick—be on the lookout?'"

"Nary time! and I was so near that I could have seen it if there had been. Both of the detectives looked at him though as if they reckoned that he wasn't up to no good and they would like to 'run' him in."

"Johnny, I am always suspicious when a stranger comes 'round and wants to stand in with the gang," the old man observed. "But I guess it is all right this time, and this cove is just the kind of fellow that we can make useful, for he's new to the country and the beaks haven't tumbled to him yet."

"Anything more for me to-night?"

"Nothing more; you're a good boy, Johnny, and the first time the gang strike anything rich I'll see that you have a finger in the pie."

"That's right, old man, for I ain't had a run of luck for a dog's age; so-long!"

Away went the young ruffian while the old man returned to his abode.

Opening the door he found the Englishman leaning against the stair railing.

"Now, I'm for you, my pippin!" he cried.

"Come right along with me and don't beskeered of the darkness," and he closed the door behind him.

Betterkin strode along in the gloom and the Englishman came right at his heels.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROMANY RYE.

AT the end of the entry there was a small door right under the staircase which led to the second floor, and at this door the old man paused.

"Stop here a minute till I say a word to you; your name is Dick, I believe?" the saloon-keeper remarked.

"Right you are—Dick Sharp; and though I mayn't look it, I'm the cove wot kin do credit to the name."

"I hope so, and I hope too that the story you have told is all straight."

"I wish I may be eternally juggered if it ain't!" the man declared, vehemently.

"It will be worse for you than for any one else if it ain't correct."

"Do you s'pose I don't know that?"

"I reckon you don't know what a hornets'-nest you're going to get into if you ain't all right. The gang of the Romany Rye are a mighty hard crowd to deal with, and once you get in with them you've got to go the whole hog or else be cut into fiddle-strings. I'm only giving you fair warning, you know, so that you'll have a chance to back out if you can't screw your courage up to the sticking-point."

"I'm the gamest bird you ever struck!" the other asserted.

"You can back out now; but five minutes more, and it will be too late."

"Drive on your go-cart! I'm a born cracksmen—a reg'lar high Tobey, and I ain't afeard o' hanythink! If the gang 'as got hany ugly job—hanythink that requires pluck and lots of backbone, that's the sort o' thing that I'm a-looking arter."

"All right! come on then. I only wanted to give you fair warning. You're a stranger, you know; you gave the sign all right; but for all that, you might be a detective in disguise, for some cove in trouble might have peached, and given away the sign so as to make things easier for him. If you are a cracksmen, why, you're going to get into a good thing; if you're a spy, you'll never see daylight again."

"Gov'nor, I ain't a bit afeard."

"Well, I reckon you're all right. If you ain't, then you are either the biggest fool or the greatest dare-devil that ever walked on top of the earth," Betterkin remarked. "Now, after you pass through this door, turn to the right, and go down a flight of stairs; at the bottom, turn to the right again, and go along about six steps."

"All correct!"

The old man opened the door, and descended the stairs to the cellar, the other following closely behind.

There was a heavy door at the bottom of the steps, and after they had entered the cellar, Betterkin took the precaution to slide the two heavy bolts which were on the door, home in their sockets.

"There, that will keep any meddlesome folks from intruding upon us," he remarked.

The darkness was intense; but the old man proceeded without any difficulty, as if, like a cat, he had the faculty of seeing in the dark.

Under the staircase was another door, in the same position and exactly like the one through which they had come on the floor above.

The old man opened the door and instructed his companion to enter, and when he had done so, shut the door and fastened it with a heavy bar, which swung on a pivot in its center.

"Another little precaution to prevent unwelcome visitors from putting in an appearance without giving us due warning," the host observed.

While the saloon-keeper was arranging the bar, the other, with natural curiosity had stretched out his hands, and made the discovery that he was in a small closet about four feet square, apparently solid walls on three sides, while the door made the fourth.

The object to be obtained by shutting themselves up in this cubby-hole was not clear; but just as the Englishman began to puzzle his brains over the matter, Betterkin completed the bar job, and then, addressing his companion, said:

"Brace yourself, now, for we are going right down into the bowels of the earth."

Then, to the ears of the wondering adventurer, came the sound of a small bell tinkling faintly in the distance.

Hardly had the sound died away when the Englishman felt that the floor beneath his feet was descending.

He understood in a moment what it meant. The floor of the closet was a trap-door, worked by machinery after the fashion of a dumb-waiter.

He was descending by this adroit means into a sub-cellar, undoubtedly the secret haunt of the desperado band of the Romany Rye, and the man could not help admiring the wisdom which had been displayed in the matter.

A cellar under a cellar, attached to such an old, common-place house as the one in which the saloon was situated, was a thing that even the shrewdest detective would not be apt to suspect.

If the house was raided by the police, and the cellar examined, the chances were a hundred to one that no one would imagine there was a sub-cellar under the regular one.

The descent only occupied a few moments, and then the machine stopped. Betterkin opened a door, which was in exactly the same position as the door above by which the pair had entered the closet, and revealed a good-sized apartment lit by a couple of large coal-oil lamps suspended from the ceiling.

There were half a dozen rude bunks arranged by the walls, and in the center of the room, right under the lamps, were two large tables; eight evil-looking fellows sat around them, some playing cards, and all drinking more or less. A keg of beer, which was on tap in the corner, furnished the liquid refreshment, each man going and helping himself whenever he felt inclined.

It was as perfect a thieves' haunt as the mind of man had ever devised.

The fellows all nodded to the saloon-keeper when he appeared, and looked with decided curiosity at his companion.

"I bring you a new pal, boys," said Betterkin, "a gentleman from across the water, an old cracksmen who has already been unlucky enough to do time in the stone-jug in this great land of liberty."

"Always glad of a new pal, if he's got the right stuff in him," responded a young, rather good-looking, and extremely muscular fellow, who seemed to be a sort of a leader to the rest.

"Sit down and have a glass of beer."

The Englishman's quick eyes had noted all the details of the scene, and having taken stock of every man in the room, judged the speaker to be a man of note in the gang, but as he was sandy-haired, with blue eyes, he did not seem to be the man to answer to the name of the Gypsy Gentleman, for the Romany race, from the earliest ages, have been noted for their swarthy complexion, ebony locks, and flashing black eyes.

"Thank ye kindly," responded the stranger, as the men made room for him at the table, and he and his companions seated themselves.

One of the gang brought a couple of glasses of beer, and placed them before the new-comers.

"Well, here's success to you," said the young fellow, raising his glass, and nodding to the Englishman. "You look like a man who would make a good pal, if you've got the right kind of stuff in you."

"I ain't the man vot ought to say it, I know; but as there ain't nobody to the fore for to speak a good word for me, nat'rally I've got for to blow my hown trumpet. I'm jest the quietest man in the world, a reg'lar lamb; but hif I can't 'old my hown when it comes to downright business, then I'm a blooming duffer, and no good; but talk is cheap, gen'lemen, and I ain't one of the kind that goes in much for it, but just put me at a piece of vork, and hif I don't do the job up hin nobby style, why I gives you leave to kick me from 'ere to 'Alifax!'"

"That's the kind of talk I like; drink hearty!" the young fellow exclaimed.

The three took a good swig at the beer, and then the young man remarked:

"The boss is late to night."

"Yes; but I expect him every minute," Betterkin replied.

"I didn't know as he would put in an appearance to-night; as a general thing, he seldom comes so late as this."

"He had some important business to which he was obliged to attend; you will understand all about it when he arrives."

During this conversation the Englishman had been carefully examining the place. It seemed to him as if there was a good deal of the rat-trap about it. If the only entrance to the cellar was by the elevator, a betrayal of the secret by one of the gang to the police would surely result in the capture of all who might happen to be in the den at the time the "pull" was made, for with the blue-coats in possession of the only entrance, escape would be impossible.

There did not seem to be any other entrance; but that there must be one the Englishman felt sure, for these law-breakers were altogether too clever rascals to be so easily entrapped.

And while he was wondering over this matter, all of a sudden, without warning, a door in the rear wall, so skillfully constructed that it looked like a part of the wall, opened, and two men walked into the apartment.

The first was a tall fellow, with a full, black beard, and rather long, curling hair, and from his swarthy complexion, a judge of mankind would have pronounced him a foreigner, a Spaniard or an Italian.

The second was all muffled up in an old overcoat, with a slouch hat pulled over his eyes, evidently disguised.

He was quickly recognized by the men in the room though, for it was no other than the escaped Sing Sing bird, Jimmy the Greek, the man the detective had been in search of when he entered the saloon.

CHAPTER XX.

A MADMAN.

A CHORUS of welcoming shouts at once came from the men in the room when the identity of the Greek was discovered, and from the respectful manner in which all within the apartment greeted his companion, the Englishman came to the conclusion that this must be the "boss," the notorious Romany Rye, or Gypsy Gentleman, to render it into English.

And there was no denying that the piratical-looking man, with his swarthy skin, his heavy masses of ringlets, and his fierce black beard, looked every inch like the Gypsy renowned in story.

"Aha, Jimmy, I'm glad to see you!" cried the muscular young fellow whom we have before mentioned. "Sing Sing couldn't hold you, could it? and that is just what I was telling the boys."

"No sir-ee!" cried the Greek, "there ain't any prison in this country that can hold any of our gang, so long as we've got the boss at our back to pull us out," and he ducked his head toward the brigand-like stranger.

The other smiled and caressed his bushy beard with a hand upon the fingers of which sparkled diamonds worth a king's ransom.

"I tell you what it is, boys," he remarked, in a languid sort of tone, as if it was really too much trouble for him to speak without being absolutely obliged to do so, "it cost a big lot of money, and don't you forget it. The fellows

up at Sing Sing are getting stiff in their demands. There was a time when if one of our boys got the 'beak' down on him and went up the river for the benefit of his health, five hundred or a thousand dollars would unlock the prison gates and let him go free; but what do you suppose it cost this time to blind the eyes of those duffers, so that they would wink at Jimmy's escape?"

All shook their heads; the conundrum was too much for them.

"Five thousand dollars!"

Exclamations of surprise came from the lips of the gang at this announcement.

The sum seemed a fabulous one.

"That is the figure, boys, and no mistake," the chief declared. "If Jimmy had been any common man it wouldn't have come so high, but the fellows that we had to practice addition, division and silence with, declared his escape would kick up no end of a row, and they couldn't afford to do the job for less, for it might cost the whole gang their places. They had the pull on me of course. It was either pay the money, or else let Jimmy stay in the stone jug."

"It was a tough price," Betterkin remarked.

"Pretty big figure," said the boss, "but of course Jimmy had to be pulled out if it took a leg. You see, boys, the advantage of belonging to a band like the one I have the honor to command. Suppose any one of you were working with a pal or two, and had the misfortune to be scooped in, as Jimmy was; how many pals, do you think, it would take to raise five thousand dollars to buy you out of Sing Sing?"

The members of the gang shook their heads. In their opinion, if any one of them was unfortunate enough to get into jail and could not get out until their pals put up five thousand dollars, the chances were great that they would remain in Sing Sing until death came to the rescue.

"You think the ducats wouldn't be raised in a hurry, eh?" laughingly said the leader.

All expressed their opinion to this effect.

"See the benefit, then, of such an organization as ours," the chief remarked. "We combine brains and capital. Without the aid of both our pal would now be safely locked in his cell. Brains could not have done the job without the aid of money to grease the itching palms of the prison officials, and money wouldn't have worked the trick without the brains to tell exactly where it must be put to do the most good."

"It's a big thing, boys, I tell you now," the Greek exclaimed. "And I was just hungry to get out, too, for I wanted a chance to get square with the man who sent me into the stone jug."

"How was it, Jimmy, anyhow?" the muscular young fellow asked. "How did the cops contrive to down you? I never heard the rights of the matter yet, though I did hear some of the coves giving it out that the superintendent himself, old Walling, had a hand in the job."

"No more to do with it than you had, old fellow," answered the ruffian, "excepting that, just by accident, he happened to drop in after I was downed. It was a strange feller—a man that I never see'd before, and he took me by the throat, just after I had put a ball into another chap who came along in time to interfere with a game I was working, and the bloke strangled me until I saw more stars than I ever did before at any one time in my life."

"You'll have to crack his head for him some of these days," the saloon-keeper remarked.

"You can just bet all your rocks on that!" the ruffian cried, with savage emphasis. "That's the game I'm going to play, and I'll make the man regret the day when he crossed my path."

"Who is this?" asked the chief, abruptly, happening for the first time to notice the Englishman. "One of our boys? His face seems familiar to me, and yet somehow I don't exactly recall him."

"A new recruit, captain, who is anxious to join our noble gang," the old man replied. "He comes with good recommendations."

"You can bet on that!" cried the Englishman, with a grin. "The very best of recommendations. If you 'ave any doubts, jest ax the warden of Charlestown prison in the Hold Bay State, or write across the waters to the keepers in Portland jail. Why, there ain't a precious prison, from Lunnon town to John O'Groat's, wot won't be able to say somethink about yours, truly."

The chief of the band had kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the face of the stranger all the time he had been speaking, and the old saloon-keeper, who was better acquainted with the moods of the Romany Rye than any of the others, saw by the expression upon his features that he was puzzled and did not know exactly what to make of the man.

Jimmy, the Greek, too was acting strangely, for he was staring at the Englishman with all the eyes in his head, and from the look he wore it was plain his suspicions were excited and he was not favorably impressed.

"If you are all right you'll find it will be a good thing for you to join my band," the chief

observed, slowly, "for we all stick until death to a pal, but while we are true to a friend we are poison to a foe, and better had the man never been born than to attempt to steal into our confidence with the idea of turning traitor, for the doom we would inflict on him could not be equaled this side of Satan's kingdom. You have penetrated into our secret haunt, and let me tell you no spy has ever yet managed to get into this apartment and lived to tell the tale. If you are true-blue, all right; if you are a sneaking spy whose mission it is to learn our secrets and then betray us to the police, the stoutest-hearted man that ever drew the breath of life would be appalled at the horrid death to which we shall doom you."

One could have heard a pin drop as the gang, in breathless silence, waited for the answer of the stranger, who they could plainly see was suspected by the chief of being a police spy.

"You ain't got no call for to say such 'ard thinks to me," the Englishman replied, with an injured air. "I'm a gentle cove and allers like to 'ave my hair smoothed the right way. Nobody never said as 'ow I was a spy afore, and I tell ye, my jolly cross coves, it really 'urts me for to 'ave you go for to suspect me. All I've got to say is, hif I ain't true-blue—sound right to the core—I wish I may die, and hif you find bout that I'm a blooming, bleeding, traitor, why you can skin me, all alive-o! Can a cove say anythink fairer nor that?"

While the man was speaking, the face of Jimmy, the Greek, had become as black as a thundercloud. He was sure now that he recognized the man.

"It's a plant—it's a plant, boys!" he cried, violently. "Look out for the door so that he can't escape!"

Pistols and knives flashed instantly, and the gang divided into two parties, one at each entrance into the cellar, leaving the Englishman and the escaped prisoner in the center of the apartment, within three feet of each other, and each one holding a revolver in his hand leveled at the other's breast.

The Greek had plucked forth his weapon the moment he had finished his speech, and the stranger had been equally as prompt.

"I know him now in spite of his disguise!" the Greek continued. "I thought I recognized him right at the beginning. This is the infernal hound, boys, that sent me to Sing Sing!"

"You are quite right, my prison-bird!" the other replied, speaking in his own natural voice and without any trace of the English accent. "I am the man that sent you to prison, and what is more, I am the man who is going to send you back there. You will not have a long lease of liberty, and I shall keep my word to the Chief of Police, for I told him that within three days I would either have you on your way up the river with bracelets on your wrists, or else you would be in a pine box, ready for Potter's Field!"

For a moment all were struck dumb with amazement at this supreme coolness.

The Greek was the first to recover the use of speech.

"You fool! don't you see that you're in a trap?" he exclaimed. "Are you madman enough to imagine that you are going to take me single-handed from this place with all my pals around me?"

"You are correct in your statement. I am a madman," cried the detective; "worse than a madman—a demon, and I'm going to take you, alive or dead!"

CHAPTER XXI.

SECURING THE PREY.

ALL the ruffians were amazed at the boldness of the stranger. What possible chance did he stand surrounded by desperate men, all eager for his blood?

His statement was undoubtedly correct—he was a madman, for no one in his right senses would have dared to penetrate into the thieves' den and then, when his true character was discovered, instead of begging for mercy, assume the offensive and attempt to recapture an escaped prisoner.

The two men were almost near enough to touch each other with the outstretched revolvers, which each had leveled at the other's breast.

But neither of the weapons were cocked. Both, in the haste of the moment, had apparently neglected this precaution.

The Greek happened to notice this fact, and was quick to plume himself upon the advantage which he supposed he had gained.

"Well, you are crazy!" he ejaculated. "Don't you see that I have got you dead to rights, even though I didn't have my pals to back my game? Your revolver is not cocked!"

"Neither is yours!" the other replied.

"I know that, but with this 'ere weapon, it ain't necessary. My pistol is a *self-cocker*, ha, ha, ha!" and the desperado laughed in triumph.

His associates drew a long breath, for they had been a little apprehensive in regard to the issue of the struggle, not that they doubted they could finish the interloper in the end, but they were afraid it would cost some of them their

lives, and now they saw all the advantage was on the side of the Greek, they greatly rejoiced.

"A *self-cocker*, eh?" quoth the stranger, seemingly not in the least disturbed by the intelligence.

"That is what I said, and that is what I mean!" the other replied, triumphantly. "Before you can raise the hammer of that pistol, I'll sock a dozen balls into you!"

"You will?" and the police spy seemed to be jeering at the desperado.

"Yes, I will!" the ruffian cried, annoyed that his threats did not affect the detective.

"Oh, no, you will not; I'm ready to give you ball for ball."

"How can you?" asked the Greek, perplexed.

"Easily enough, my revolver is also a *self-cocker*!"

For a moment there was a dead silence—a silence so intense that the heavy breathing of the actors in this strange scene could be distinctly heard.

The chances in the fight were even, after all. It was hardly possible that either one could escape without a mortal wound, and although there wasn't any doubt that the police spy would be murdered by the band, even if he escaped being killed outright by the bullets of his antagonist, yet that was poor consolation for the Greek, for if he perished by the hands of his foe, the knowledge that the spy could not escape would not bring him back to life again, and so he essayed to parley with his opponent.

"See here, I don't want to kill you!" he exclaimed.

"That is exactly where the difference is between us, for I had just as lief kill you as not. You are a human wolf, and the quicker you are put out of the way, so you will not be able to do any more harm, the better it will be for mankind."

"Oh, that's all gammon!" the rough exclaimed. "You are only talking now for the sake of hearing yourself talk. Maybe you can kill me, but I guess you'll be fitted for a funeral about the same time."

"What do I care for that?" the detective replied, contemptuously. "I have registered an oath to recapture you, alive or dead—I have sworn by all that a man holds sacred in this world to exterminate the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye, and if I live I will most surely keep my oath. You think you have me in a trap; instead of that I have turned the tables, and all of you are in one. I have been talking to gain time—to allow the police to surround the house and occupy every avenue of escape. The time has come, you are in the net and not one of you will escape; the doors of Sing Sing are yawning wide to receive the Gypsy Gentleman and his bloodthirsty band. You threaten me with death! Bah! I laugh at the threat! I am a demon, and cannot be killed by any such wretched criminals as you are!"

Hardly had the vaunt left his lips when there came the sound of heavy blows from the floor above, as though the police were forcing their way into the house.

A cry of alarm arose from the lips of the gang.

"Curse you! I'll finish you anyway!" the Greek yelled, and at the same moment he pulled the trigger of his weapon.

But the spy, so demon-like in his defiance of death, was equally as quick.

Both hammers fell at the same moment, but both weapons were not discharged. Cartridge-makers are but human, and the articles they turn out are not always reliable.

The Greek's pistol missed fire, but the weapons were so near together that only the keenest eyes in the gang could discover which weapon had been discharged.

The result was soon apparent, though, for with a hollow groan the ruffian sunk to the ground, evidently badly wounded.

With wild yells of rage the desperadoes made a rush at the detective, and half a dozen bullets whizzed in the air.

The man seemed to bear a charmed life, for apparently not a ball touched him.

With a catlike bound he placed his back against the wall, and, as the band rushed upon him, he shot down the three foremost ones in the coolest and most deliberate manner.

The Romany Rye had not joined in the attack, and when he beheld the best of his men fall before the deadly fire of the detective, and just at the same time heard a noise overhead which convinced him that the police were in the cellar above, apparently searching for a clew to the underground retreat, he concluded that in the present case discretion was the better part of valor, and so he called to the gang to flee.

"Skip, boys, as fast as you can!" he yelled, as he and the old saloon-keeper rushed for the secret passage, the only way by which they could escape, for the police, evidently posted in regard to the thieves' den, were searching for the elevator.

All followed the pair, with the exception of the muscular young fellow.

His blood was up, Jimmy, the Greek, was his own particular pal, and he was determined to avenge his downfall.

He had emptied his revolver at the spy without apparently doing him any damage, and now, confident of his superior strength, he closed in upon him.

The detective had been so busily employed in repelling the attacks of the others that the ruffian succeeded in his design.

But when the two grappled, the rest hastening to escape, leaving the pair to fight it out between them, it was not long before the young scoundrel came to the conclusion that he had made a mistake in coming to close quarters with the man-hunter.

Muscular as he was, an expert boxer and wrestler—pugilism was the profession that he was supposed to follow, when not engaged in helping himself to the valuables of his fellow-citizens—yet he found the detective was fully a match for him.

Entwined like two serpents they struggled over the floor, while the noise made by the police in the cellar above, forcing their way into the elevator passage, became louder and louder.

It was clear that the officers would soon come to the assistance of the detective, while his pals had given leg-bail.

The anger of the ruffian began to cool, and sober sense to exert its sway. It was no longer a question with him if he could conquer the spy and so avenge his pal, but whether he would be able to break away from the iron-like grasp which held him so tightly, and make his escape before the police arrived on the scene, for the fellow was "wanted" by the authorities for some pretty serious matters.

He exerted all his strength—tried every trick that he knew, but the detective foiled him every time.

At last, growing desperate, he made a superhuman effort, and as the pair, just at that moment, happened to stumble against one of the tables, he was enabled to trip the detective, but the other clung to him so tightly that both went down together.

Over and over they rolled; the rough felt that his strength was departing, his breath began to come thick and fast. He felt that a few more moments must end the struggle, and so he made one last, desperate effort.

He relinquished the hold he had, and with both hands grasped the detective by the throat, hoping to choke him into insensibility.

It was a fatal movement for him, for the spy, in changing his grip to meet this new attack, chanced to come in contact with a revolver which had been dropped during the struggle.

Grasping the weapon by the barrel he brought the butt down with terrible force upon the head of the ruffian.

Three fearful blows, and then, with a gasp, the felon released his hold, a groan or so, and the spy rolled him over, insensible.

The victor arose to his feet just as the police descended through the elevator, and as they looked upon the scene they asked themselves if this man was not really a demon.

CHAPTER XXII.

PLANNING A TRAP.

SKILLFULLY as the police raid had been planned, yet it was far from being a complete success. In fact, with all his shrewdness and his large experience, the superintendent had failed to comprehend the greatness of the scale upon which the Romany Rye carried on his operations.

While the spy was worming his way into the confidence of the rascals, the police completely surrounded the house.

That the secret band had a meeting-place in a vault under the old house had been ascertained by the officials, but how to get into the vault was a mystery.

Naturally, the police surmised that there was more than one way of getting into and out of the place, for the Gypsy Gentleman was too sharp a rascal to allow himself to be caught in a trap, as he would most certainly be, if there was only one entrance to the vault and the police should become possessed of the secret.

So the captain, who had been detailed to make the raid, being warned by the superintendent, placed a watch, not only upon the house in which the saloon was situated, but its immediate neighbors on both sides, for it was a natural supposition that from the vault underground passages might lead to one of the two houses, so if the police made a descent upon the saloon, while they were forcing their way into the underground retreat, the inmates could make good their escape through the adjoining house.

But the net spread by the blue-coats was not large enough to surround the game.

When they entered the cellar all the gang had vanished with the exception of the men who had been disabled by the demon-like detective.

"This way!" he cried, as soon as the officers appeared, and he hastened to the secret door in the wall. "There is a passage here through which the rest have escaped. If we follow closely, we may stand a chance to capture the whole gang."

But the secret door was so cunningly contrived that though it had yielded at a touch from the ruffian chief, yet the detective could

not discover the spring, nor succeed in moving the door in the least.

The police, however, were provided with tools fitted for just such work, and it did not take them long with their heavy crow-bars to smash the door into a hundred pieces.

A long, dark, narrow passage was revealed.

Taking a bull's-eye lantern from one of the officers, and with his revolver ready for action, the spy led the way.

About fifty feet from the vault the passage turned abruptly to the right; about a hundred feet more and they came to a heavy iron door imbedded in a stone wall.

It took twenty minutes of hard work to force a passage through this obstacle, and then a cellar stood revealed.

It was an ordinary cellar, and when the police ascended to the floor above they found themselves in an old stable, a small building which had not apparently been used for some time; the doors leading into the street were locked, and in fact, if the pursuers had not been sure that the rogues had escaped through the passage, they would have been apt to believe they were on a wrong scent.

The means of escape had been cunningly contrived, for the stable was on the cross street, and he would have been a wonderful detective indeed who could have guessed there was a secret means of communication between the saloon and stable.

Thanks to the underground passage, the Romany Rye and his gang got off without detection, for the police were not up to the trick of watching the houses in the next street.

Naturally the success which had crowned the efforts of the spy was a wonder to all who were admitted into the secret, for the part that the Demon Detective—as he now began to be termed by those who knew of his exploits—had taken in this matter was not permitted to become public.

All that the world knew of the affair was the account given out from police headquarters: "The detective having information that the escaped prisoner, Jimmy the Greek, was to be found at a certain place, made a descent upon it, and in the struggle the convict was killed." So it was published, and when the Romany Rye read the account his face grew dark with rage.

"Aha! this devil is being kept in the back-ground!" he cried. "Strange contradiction to the most of the men in the thief-catching line, who are generally as anxious to have their deeds blazoned to the world as all other men in public life. Who can he be, and how can I get at him? One thing is certain in my mind, and that is, if I do not get this bloodhound out of the way, I may as well retire from business, for in the long run he'll be apt to hunt me down."

It will be perceived from this remark that the Gypsy Gentleman had already learned to fear the secret agent who had so unexpectedly started in upon the scent.

He realized that it was a question of life or death; if he did not succeed in destroying the man-hunter, who was following him up so closely, his career was more than likely to be a short one.

Desperate cases demand desperate remedies, and the leader of the law-defying band was a man who never stopped to count the cost when he decided upon executing a measure.

Never in the history of crime was there a band formed with more care than the one which acknowledged the Romany Rye as its captain.

Not only did it include within its ranks skillful criminals, expert in every grade of crime, but also men, supposed to be highly respectable, some in high stations, whose province it was to enforce the laws, not to break them.

With prudent forethought the Gypsy Gentleman believed it was always wise to have "friends at court," and many a time when some one of the band was unlucky enough to be caught, thanks to the influence exerted in high quarters, the criminal either escaped scot-free or else was only lightly punished.

It was a matter of surprise to the community at large when they perused in the daily newspapers an account of how some unfortunate man, for some trivial offense, was obliged to stand a heavy bail, a thousand or two of dollars, and then in the next column read about some noted criminal, caught almost red-handed in his crime, and only placed under some few hundred dollars' bonds, which invariably were forfeited, for the man much preferred to pay the money than to stand trial.

In nine cases out of ten, too, the bondsmen were fellows who were not worth as many cents as the bailpiece called for dollars.

It was a mystery to the thoughtful men who took time in the hurly-burly of city life to reflect upon the matter, but the criminals, who were either members of the Black-faced Band—so called because it was their habit, when on nocturnal plundering expeditions, to cover their faces with black crape—or had knowledge of its existence, knew why it was that the rascals got off so easily.

The Romany Rye had spoken; he had whispered:

"This is one of my men, go light!"

Of course there were times when even all the influence of the Gypsy Gentleman could not impede the wheels of the car of Justice, as witness the case of Jimmy, the Greek.

But if neither judge nor jury could be corrupted, and the criminal was so unfortunate as to be sent to the State Prison, then some of the venal men in office there were bribed to wink at the prisoner's escape.

And so now, when the leader of the secret band made up his mind that the Demon Detective must be put out of the way, no matter how great the task might be, he sent for one of his confederates, who was no less a person than an employee of the Central Police Station, the head-quarters of the police system of the great city.

The Romany Rye was a cunning fellow, and so managed it that no one of the band was ever permitted to see him except when disguised; the Englishman, Robert Ainsworth, Cheeky Bob, who was now his right-hand man being the only exception to the rule, so no one had the slightest idea as to who he really was.

The head-quarters party was one of the leading members of the band, and always had a good share in all the spoils, and yet the only thing he was expected to do was to keep the captain posted in regard to what was going on in the police department.

But in the case of this strange detective he was completely at fault.

"I haven't the remotest idea who it is, or what he looks like," he said. "No man that at all answers the description has been near the superintendent, as far as I know, and I most certainly would have known, for I always keep my eyes open for strangers."

"A trap must be arranged for him; the fellow must be put out of the way, or else all of us will be landed in the State Prison," the captain said. "You must go to the chief and pretend that one of the band has weakened and informed you that there is to be a meeting of some of the chief members of the gang to-morrow night at an old house somewhere in Carmansville, and quite near to the river. The chief will jump at the chance to put this devil on our track, and we will lead him to his death."

The idea was easily carried out, for the superintendent fell at once into the snare.

And on the following night the Demon Detective, so carefully disguised that no one could possibly have recognized him, was in the neighborhood of Carmansville just after nightfall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE JUDGE'S REVELATION.

It was a pretty place that old Judge Bullwinkle possessed at Yonkers, and people of great taste in such matters admitted that although there might be estates in the neighborhood that cost a great deal more money, yet there wasn't one more perfect in all its details, or with a finer location.

Dinner was just over, and the judge and his daughter lingered at the table, having dismissed the servant.

The dining-room was one of the pleasantest apartments in the house; it faced the west, and as the father and daughter sat at their ease, the old judge sipping his after-dinner cup of coffee, and helping himself to the nuts and raisins, while the girl leaned back in her chair, mechanically folding and unfolding her napkin, as though her thoughts were far away, all they had to do was to look through the spacious windows to behold as pretty a view as the eye of man could care to look upon.

The house was situated upon the heights, below was the town, beyond that the beautiful river and the bold cliffs of the Palisade range, behind which the sun was now descending, a great ball of fire.

The judge deftly extracted the kernels from an English walnut, helped himself to a couple of raisins, took a sip of coffee to wash them down, and then, happening to glance through the window, caught sight of the beautiful view.

"Ophelia, just look at the sun!" he exclaimed. "It seems to me that the view this afternoon is really more beautiful than ever before."

"It is very lovely," the girl returned, in a listless way, glancing at the superb landscape with eyes that evidently took little interest in the scene.

"Never saw it look more beautiful!" the judge repeated. "Your mother used to be exceedingly fond of sitting here and watching the descent of the sun. I remember we drove out here one afternoon and were struck by the beauty of the view, and your mother said, 'Abraham, this is exactly the spot where I want a house. Her will was always

law to me, you know. I bought the ground, she drew the plans for the house, and every pleasant afternoon while it was being erected we used to drive out and watch the progress of the workmen."

"Yes, she always spoke of the place as being the dearest spot on earth to her."

"No doubt, no doubt," and the old judge shook his head and heaved a deep sigh. "It was only natural, under the circumstances. She selected the spot, had the house built according to her own ideas, planned the laying-out of the grounds, and, in fact, I do not believe there is a shrub or tree on the place that she did not see planted with her own eyes."

"I remember what pleasure she took in the garden."

"Yes, yes; no wonder she was fond of it. Ah! what a treasure of a woman she was."

The girl glanced askance at the old gentleman; she understood what was coming when he began in this strain.

The judge was one of those peculiar men who pride themselves upon the adroitness with which they handle other people.

The girl had been devotedly attached to her mother, and now she was gone, prized her memory above all things.

When the old gentleman wished to get the girl to consent to anything which he fancied might be disagreeable to her, he began by turning the conversation upon her mother, and after making a due impression he introduced the real subject.

"Ah, yes," he continued, "a really remarkable woman; earth holds few that are equal to what she once was. But you, my child, you are very much like her, and I know one of the pleasant thoughts that she cherished before grim death interfered and snatched her from us, was that when she was gone, you would reign here in her place. She thought, you know, that you would live here all your life, and of course at every step you would be reminded of her."

"So I am. The thought was a beautiful one, and so true, too," the daughter replied, her face glowing.

"Yes, but, my dear girl, one of these days, you know, I shall be taken from you—not for quite a number of years, I trust, for I am still a hale and hearty man; but in the course of nature such an event must occur some time. Now how much more resigned I should be to meet the inevitable result if I knew your future was provided for—I mean if you were married."

"Married!" murmured the girl, her eyes fixed vacantly upon the view without, and her fingers playing nervously with one of the ribbons of her dress.

"Yes, married, my dear—then, and not until then, will you be truly settled for life. I presume you have suspected that I have not been averse to the suit of a certain gentleman—in fact, that I look upon him with extremely favorable eyes?"

"Yes, sir."

"I refer to Mr. Gloster."

"So I supposed, sir."

"A fine fellow; a perfect gentleman in every respect, and I do not remember to have ever met a man whom I would prefer to accept as a son-in-law."

The girl was silent, and her face sober as though she was in deep thought.

"I fancied, too, that the gentleman's attentions were not disagreeable to you," he continued.

"Oh, no, far from being disagreeable, and yet—"

"And yet, what?" the old gentleman asked, as the girl hesitated. "Explain yourself fully, as the matter is an important one."

"Father, I do not really know what I think about Mr. Gloster," she replied, impulsively. "He is very pleasant and agreeable, and yet at times there is something about him that seems to jar upon me. I cannot explain what it is; I can only say that such is the fact, that is all."

"I understand—I understand," and the judge nodded his head, sagely. "But, my dear child, you ought not to allow yourself to be influenced by any such idle fancies, for it isn't anything but a fancy. I comprehend exactly how you are affected. Your mother used to take just such whims without rhyme or reason, and many is the hour I have wast-

ed in talking her out of her odd notions. And now, to come right to the point, apart from this odd feeling, is there any objection you can perceive? Is not Mr. Gloster a suitable match for any lady in the land?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"He is enormously rich, a generous, whole-souled fellow, one well-calculated to win the heart of any woman, provided she was heart-free, as you are."

"But, father, I am afraid that I do not feel toward Mr. Gloster as a girl ought to feel toward the man to whom she confides all her future."

"My dear child, you mustn't yield to that romantic idea. Very few people in this life ever marry the person they like the best."

"But why is it necessary for me to marry at all?" she asked. "Thanks to your wealth, I need never marry for an establishment."

"Ah, my dear child, I was afraid you had some such idea in your head," the judge observed, in quite a doleful tone. "And I see it will be necessary for me to reveal to you a secret which otherwise I should have kept securely locked in my own breast. Ophelia, the world believes me to be a wealthy man—"

The old gentleman hesitated for a moment, and the girl looked at him with eyes full of wonder, for she understood that an important revelation was at hand.

"It is an old saying, child, that no one ever knows how a man stands financially until he is dead and his debts are paid. It is a very true one, too. I am usually rated as being comfortably situated, with four or five hundred thousand dollars; but, in truth, if I should die to-morrow, I doubt if my estate would be able to pay my debts and leave enough to bury me decently."

"I would not have believed it!"

"No, nor anybody else, for that matter. Everything is all right now. I am something of a financier, and as my credit is excellent, I find no difficulty in running along smoothly. The trouble is I have invested largely in Western mines, and all my fortune has been swallowed by some colossal holes in the ground. There are a couple out of the lot that promise to pay if I can only contrive to hold on to them; but I must have some money."

"I am just at that pinch when a few thousand dollars will enable me to grasp a fortune, but if I cannot raise the money then it will be a difficult matter to ward off utter ruin."

"In fact, Ophelia, my future is in your hands. This property is mortgaged for fifty thousand dollars; it is supposed to be worth a hundred, but if it is forced upon the market, I doubt very much if it would fetch more than the face of the mortgage."

"Mr. Gloster is anxious to buy it; he will give fifty thousand cash, and assume the mortgage. He wishes it as a wedding present for you. The fifty thousand cash will enable me to secure a fortune, the estate settled upon you secures your future. Gloster is enormously rich, the sum is a mere trifle to him. He loves you, and is anxious to give you a convincing proof that you are all in all to him."

"Think the matter over, Ophelia, and do not let a foolish girl-whim stand in the way."

"Oh, I will not be rash, father, but this is so sudden that I must have time to reflect," and then she excused herself and retired.

"She will consent," the judge muttered. "She is under too weighty obligations to refuse."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNEXPECTED CALLER.

THE chief of the outlaw band and his confidential man of business sat together in the cosy library of the former.

This was on the evening previous to the one on which occurred the events related in our last chapter.

Dinner was just over, and both of the men having partaken largely of wine, felt in very good humor with themselves and all the world.

They had lit their cigars, and, snugly ensconced in comfortable, easy-chairs, were ready for a confidential chat.

"I tell you what it is, Bob, this is a deuced sight better than the life we used to lead across the water," the owner of the mansion remarked. "There's nothing like these new countries for a man of industry and enterprise to make money. Just see how well I have succeeded! Who, to look at me now would suspect the kind of life I led across the water?"

"That's very true and I'm in a great deal better feather than I was a couple of months ago," the other replied.

This was true enough, for in the brief time good fare had worked a wonderful change in the man and he did not look much like the half-starved vagrant who had stolen into the house on thievish thoughts intent.

"As long as things go well it is easy enough for a man to keep his head above water, and the old saying that money makes the mare go is about as true a one as there is."

"To him that hath shall be given," quoted the secretary.

"Ay, ay, you have it right at your fingers' ends, eh, Bob? But you always were a scholar, and that is the reason why you haven't got on any better. You are too much of a dreamer, my man. You're not the sort of a chap to snatch Fortune by her forelock, as I heard a fellow say one day, and, do you know, I thought he had hit it about right."

"It's the bold game that wins nine times out of ten. Just look at my own case for example. Do you suppose I would be where I am now if I hadn't gone in for a big thing from the very beginning?"

"I tell you, Bob, old chappy, it don't pay to be a small rascal in this world; you must go in on a big scale if you calculate to be anything."

"Most certainly fortune has favored the game you have played," the other admitted.

"Well, I should say it had! To use the vulgate, I should 'smile!' Just look how I stand! I'm as big a nob as the best of them. Go to any of the big-bugs in my set—you can pick out the smartest of them, and there will not be one of the crowd who will set me down as being worth less than a million."

"And yet it's all sham," observed the secretary.

"Pretty nearly so, and I'm not the only man in this big city who is in that box either. No, sir, if the truth was known you'd find there are quite a number of men who hold their heads high and rank as millionaires who would be bothered to pay their debts if all the bills came in at once and the creditors demanded an instant settlement."

"No doubt about that; more humbug than anything else in this life, and the more brass a man has the better he is off," the other observed.

"That's the idea, and that is what you ought to act up to. See how brass has carried me along. But I say, Bob, the most amusing thing to me about these big-bugs, is their anxiety for money. Now if I really had a million or two, do you suppose I'd trouble myself about getting more? Not at all! I'd go in for a jolly good time, but as for these old Satans, why, there's that Judge Bullwinkle, I believe that old rascal would sell himself outright, body and soul, if he could get anybody fool enough to buy him."

"I shouldn't be surprised!" cried Bob.

"I know it to be a fact. Do you suppose he would think of me for a son-in-law if he hadn't been fooled into the belief that I had lots of money?"

"If he thought you were a poor man I don't suppose you would stand much chance."

"As good a chance to be struck by lightning!" exclaimed the other, laughing contemptuously. "They say that every man has his price, and the fellow who said that was a wise man. I knew the judge was a grasping old miser in spite of the fact that he is rolling in wealth, so I baited a hook which caught him on the first trial."

"He owns the pretty place at Yonkers, the one where he lives; you remember I pointed it out to you when we were out driving the other day."

Ainsworth nodded.

"The place is worth fifty or sixty thousand dollars, and I told the old man I would give him a hundred thousand dollars for it on purpose to be able to make it over to his daughter as a wedding-present."

"And he jumped at the offer, eh?"

"Of course he did; why, the avaricious tears fairly came in the old man's eyes as he took me by the hand and expressed his opinion that it was a noble offer."

"If he only suspected that you were throwing a sprat to catch a whale, eh?"

"My boy, he would be apt to want to go for my scalp, but my game is not to allow him to suspect the truth until I am fairly wedded to his charming daughter, and then I shall cover the matter up so that he will really not know how I stand until I have wheedled him into some nice little speculations which I shall put on foot for his especial benefit, and by then I calculate to ease him of a good share of the wealth he has accumulated."

"Then, when the grand explosion comes, I shall be afar, enjoying myself in some country where money counts, and the man who possesses it can lord it like a prince over the unfortunate souls who are unlucky enough to hoe a poor man's row."

"But the girl?"

"Sweet plaything for an idle hour, and then, like all other playthings, to be cast aside and forgotten. It's a pleasant prospect, isn't it?" and the arch-conspirator rubbed his hands gleefully together.

"Yes, and as far as I can see there's only one obstacle in the way."

"And what is that?—not the girl, for although she is a rather reserved piece of humanity, and does not appear to take very kindly to my love-making, yet I am tolerably sure it is only maiden coyness and when the time comes she will say 'yes' to my ardent suit with all the grace in the world. She loves her father dearly; the hundred thousand dollars has made him my slave, and there isn't the least doubt he will find a way to get her to consent, even if she is rather averse."

"I was not thinking of the girl, but of this mysterious man who has already dealt us such a fearful blow." The secretary spoke in a low tone and an anxious look appeared upon his face.

"Do not worry about him; I have concocted a scheme which will settle him for good and all."

"He is a dangerous foe."

"You are right; the most dangerous that ever sprung into my path and dared me to a trial of strength, and the joke of the thing is I believe he is my ancient foe, the man whom I ruined and sent to State Prison on a false accusation years ago. The one whose daughter I have so vainly sought. I wrecked the husband that I might seize upon the wife, but she evaded me, fled with her child, and I have never been able to get on the track of either one of them since."

"It is no wonder that the man pursues me with such a bitter hatred, and I fully comprehend that either I must kill him or he will most certainly bring me to a savage reckoning."

At this point a servant came with the intelligence that a lady wished to see the master of the mansion—a lady closely veiled, who declined to give her name, but requested the privilege of a private interview on important business.

Gloster at once descended to the parlor, whither the lady had been shown, and was amazed to discover that the unknown was the judge's daughter.

Miss Bullwinkle came immediately to the point. Woman-like, she had forgotten everything but her desire to avoid a union which was distasteful to her.

Briefly she explained her position, and the arch schemer, though annoyed beyond measure at the discovery, concealed the anger he experienced, and listened with a pleasant but rather incredulous smile.

The girl simply said she had resolved to act independently of the usages of society and see if she could not come to an understanding. She admitted she had received his attentions, and, in obedience to her father's desire, had tried to look upon him in the light of her future husband, but when she came to calmly reflect upon the matter, she had come to the conclusion that she did not feel toward him as a girl should feel toward a man who was one day to be her lord.

Gloster smiled gallantly, thanked her for the confidence which she had reposed in him, and said, soothingly, that she laid too much

stress upon her imaginings; he hadn't the least doubt that they would get on splendidly together and she must not yield to idle fears.

The interview was a brief one, for the gentleman treated the matter so lightly that the girl quickly came to the conclusion it would only be a waste of time to pursue the subject further, and so, thanking him for the attention with which he had listened to her statement, she departed, sad and sick at heart.

And Gloster rejoined his companion to laugh over the occurrence.

"She's a regular daisy of a girl!" he exclaimed, "but she has some foolish romantic ideas in her head which she would be better without. I'm not going to let a woman's whim stand in the way of my grasping a fortune! She's mine and the money too beyond a doubt!"

CHAPTER XXV.

AN IMPORTANT QUESTION.

WE must return now to Harry Mortimer, the actor, whom we have neglected too long, although there was reason for it, as nothing worth the detailing had occurred to him since we last followed his fortunes.

His search for the girl was a fruitless one, although he had not grudged either time or money in the pursuit.

It was a mysterious affair, and the more he reflected upon it, the more puzzled he became.

Why did the girl so persistently hide herself away? She was evidently interested in him, and then, too, he had been enabled by the chance of fortune to render her a service. Why should she not permit him to see her?

He had frequent consultations with his old actor friend upon the subject, and this gentleman shrewdly suggested there might be obstacles in the way; the girl might not be able to see him; she might be absent from the city—a dozen causes might be assigned.

"Depend upon it," observed the old gentleman, "if she is a free agent—if she is in the city and wishes to see you, it is an easy matter for her to arrive at the accomplishment of her desire. She knows who and what you are, and when she wishes an interview it can be quickly arranged."

This was the truth and Mortimer could not deny it, but he fretted all the same.

Then the idea came into his head that the lady might possibly content herself with gazing upon him from the front of the house amid the audience while he performed on the stage, and so he got to scanning the faces in the auditorium with eager scrutiny.

On two occasions he fancied he saw a lady in the theater who resembled the charming creature who had fascinated him. These particular times were two matinee days, a week apart.

And as soon as the curtain descended he hurried on his street clothes as fast as possible and went around to Broadway, hoping to meet her on the promenade, but he was not gratified.

And yet, in spite of this discouragement, he confidently expected to behold her again.

It was on the same night when the events detailed in our last chapter took place that Mortimer, emerging from the back-door of the theater at the close of the performance, a little after eleven o'clock, was both surprised and delighted at beholding the well-remembered figure of the girl, closely cloaked and veiled as before, standing a little way up the street.

She nodded to him as he came out, and he, understanding it as a permission to join her, immediately hastened to her side.

"I began to fear I should never have the pleasure of seeing you again," he said, as he offered his arm.

She accepted the escort, and together they proceeded up the street.

"I feared so myself," she replied, her voice low, and it was evident she was laboring under deep embarrassment.

"If I could only make you understand how anxiously I have looked forward to the pleasure of another meeting with you!" he remarked, his earnest tone plainly showing that his heart was in his words.

"I owe you an apology for my abrupt departure on the night when you arrived in time to be of such service to me, but it was not my fault. The horse took fright and ran

away; the sudden start threw me down in the bottom of the carriage and at the same time closed the door, so that it was impossible for me to do anything, as I was stunned by the fall, fainted, and did not recover until the carriage arrived at the stable. The animal knew enough to proceed directly to his home.

"In the newspapers on the next morning I read the account of the capture of the ruffian on the Boulevard, and as no mention was made of any one being injured, I knew you had escaped. Otherwise I should most certainly have sought you out, although there were obstacles in the way—circumstances which seemed to say that it was best that we should be as strangers to each other."

"I trust that your presence here to-night may be accepted by me as a proof that the circumstances of which you speak no longer exist!" exclaimed Mortimer, eagerly. "Of course, I am aware that I am only a chance acquaintance. I was fortunate enough to be able to render you a slight service—any other gentleman would have been glad to have done the same in my place—but I was the lucky individual, and I am glad that the incident occurred, for to it I owe the pleasure of your acquaintance. I will say, frankly, that I prize the honor greatly, and I should deeply regret if aught happened to make us strangers again."

"Mr. Mortimer, you are a gentleman, and I feel sure I can trust you," the lady observed, in a voice that visibly trembled in spite of her efforts to remain calm. "You can, most assuredly, as a brother, and you will find I will not be unworthy of the confidence."

"I have something particular to say to you; I wish to ask your advice; I am placed in a very trying and unpleasant position. I have been called upon to decide a momentous question which may involve the entire future of a person in whom I take a deep interest. I do not feel competent in the matter; it requires a wiser head than mine—a better judgment. Will you advise me?"

"I shall be glad to do so to the best of my ability," replied the young actor, wondering at the strangeness of the request.

"I have quite a little story to tell—it will take some time, and it is quite late now," the girl remarked, hesitating a little.

"Yes; but it is nearly an hour to midnight, and it will hardly take you as long as that to tell your story, and—excuse me if I speak boldly—but I hope you are not going to deny me the pleasure of seeing you to your home on this occasion, and I also hope you will permit this acquaintance, so strangely begun, to continue."

"Oh, sir, I don't know what to say in regard to that!" the lady exclaimed, deeply agitated. "It is very foolish of me, indeed, to come out all alone at such an hour as this; but the first time I acted entirely on impulse; it was a whim, and then so really ignorant was I that I never dreamed there would be any danger. I never thought of any one molesting me. The carriage was waiting for me and of course I never thought of any one troubling me. To-night I know better; I know that I must be on my guard, but I was so anxious to get your advice that I determined to risk it."

"Have you a carriage waiting for you to-night?"

"No, sir; my intention is to hire one of the hacks which I believe are always standing in Union Square to convey me home. I know all this is very mysterious, but I trust you will believe me when I say that there isn't anything wrong about the matter, and there is a most urgent reason for it."

"I haven't the least doubt in regard to the innocence of your motives," Mortimer answered, quickly. "But will you not accept my escort to-night? I give you my word of honor as a gentleman that I will not attempt to learn where you live if you desire to keep the matter a secret, although I sincerely hope you will not deny me the pleasure of your acquaintance in the future."

"I cannot say as to that," the girl answered, sadness plainly visible in her voice. "Believe me when I say that most earnestly I desire that pleasure also, but I am so situated that I cannot tell whether it may be permitted or not. But I will accept your escort. You can procure the coach, and while we are on the road—for I have quite a dis-

tance to go—I can explain the matter upon which I wish your advice."

"Very well, I shall be happy to oblige you. One of the hackmen on the square I know."

Then he explained to the lady how he was indebted to the man for the warning which had enabled him to come to her rescue just in the nick of time on the night when she had been waylaid by the foot-pud on the road.

The lady expressed her satisfaction with this plan, and the two proceeded at once to Union Square.

The friendly hackman was at his accustomed post, remembered the young man instantly, and was glad of a chance to earn a fare.

"Tell him to drive straight up Broadway toward Fort Washington until he is told to stop," the lady said to Mortimer, after they had entered the hack, and the driver at the door waited for directions.

Away rolled the carriage at a good pace, and then the strange girl began the promised recital.

"It is the story of a woman that I am about to relate," she said, "or a girl rather, for she can hardly be said to have arrived at the years of discretion yet."

"She is now about twenty, fortunately situated, and surrounded by all the luxuries that wealth can procure."

"Yet she can look back and remember the time, although she was only a wee bit of a child, when she and an unfortunate mother were suffering for the bare necessities of life, when they had hardly clothes to their backs or food to put in their mouths."

"The mother, toiling as only a mother can toil for her child, fell deadly sick, actual starvation stared both mother and child in the face, and then came an angel of mercy, a rich woman who had once known the mother."

"She eased the couch of the dying woman, and when the Dark Angel claimed the sufferer for his own, she adopted the child and brought her up as her own daughter, treating her with all a mother's tenderness."

"A noble woman!" added Mortimer.

"True, she was noble, and now she, too, is gone, but her husband is left. Reverse of fortune has come, but a wealthy marriage gives the adopted daughter a chance to show her gratitude. By wedding a man whom she fairly loathes, whose touch is as poison to her, she can save her benefactor from ruin. What should she do?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

A BOLD MOVEMENT.

THE disguise that the Demon Detective had assumed was really a marvelous one.

He had got himself up in exact imitation of one of the captured ruffians, a peculiar-looking fellow, who among the cracksmen was known as Dutch John.

He was a stolid-faced fellow, with shaggy flaxen hair and a scrubby beard of the same hue, and when the detective assumed a wig and beard exact in their resemblance to the hair and whiskers of the "cross cove," the likeness he bore to the ruffian was remarkable.

As it happened, his eyes were the same color, and the contour of his face something like Dutch John's.

Then, too, Dutch John spoke with a decided German accent, which the man-hunter, thanks to his powers of mimicry, could imitate exactly.

And in order to make the deception still more perfect, Dutch John was quietly and secretly removed to a cell at police headquarters, and the report given out that he had been enabled, by the aid of confederates, to escape while on his way for examination.

So the news was spread broadcast over the city that Dutch John was at liberty, especial care being taken to have all the sporting houses where rascals were suspected to congregate visited by detectives who openly announced that they were on the track of the escaped prisoner.

This was done to prepare the band for the appearance among them of the disguised detective.

It was a hazardous game, but the bloodhound did not seem to have the least fear, although he well knew that his life would not

be worth an hour's purchase if the gang should discover the cheat after he was in their secret haunt.

All seemed favorable, however, for the success of the spy's enterprise, for the traitorous official at police head-quarters pretended that one of the gang had been bribed by him to reveal the secrets of the league, so it was anticipated that the Demon Detective, being possessed of this knowledge, would not have any difficulty in penetrating into the secret haunt of the law-defying band.

It was the intention of the chief to repeat the maneuver that had resulted so successfully before.

The spy was to penetrate into the stronghold of the secret band, and a strong body of police, following on his track, was to surround the house, and at a favorable moment break into it and bag the ruffians.

So when the detective, disguised as Dutch John, cautiously made his way to the old house, which was said to be the robbers' head-quarters, two more detectives, carefully disguised, followed him at a safe distance.

The old house, the detective's destination, was a three-storied wooden building, very much the worse for wear, which stood right at the water's edge, and from it a small wharf extended into the stream.

The building had been erected by a small manufacturing concern, but the speculation had not paid, the partners quarreled, and finally the law stepped in to settle the matter, and the able gentlemen who argued the case contrived to mix matters up so thoroughly that a settlement seemed impossible, and so for years the building had remained without a tenant until the Gypsy Gentleman chanced to come across it, and learning the particulars, saw that it would make a fine up-town rendezvous for his gang.

No one ever came near the building; it was in an isolated spot, and being near the river, access could be had to it both by land and water, an important consideration.

And so carefully had these organized rascals conducted themselves, that until the traitorous official made known the secret which he pretended was confided to him by one of the band, nobody had the slightest suspicion there was anything wrong about the old house, or that it had other tenants than the rats and mice which had found a harborage there.

The Demon Detective, being fully posted, proceeded like a man to whom the way was perfectly familiar.

Straight down the hill he went—the moon was not yet up, and although the sky was spangled with myriads of stars, yet the night was dark, so that no extra caution was necessary, as it was clearly impossible for the sharpest spy to keep a diligent watch without danger of discovery.

All the doors and windows in the house were tightly nailed up, apparently; the doors being guarded with rough boards, and the windows with strong shutters.

The detective passed around the house to the rear, where the pier jutted out into the river.

There was a small door there, which looked as if it was tightly closed as the rest, but the disguised man-hunter, after a quick glance around as if to be certain that he had arrived at the right place, stepped up to the door and passed his hand carefully over the upper part of it until he encountered a nail-head which projected a little from the surface of the wood.

"This must be it," he murmured, and then he pushed the ball of his thumb on the nail-head, which yielded slightly under the pressure.

To his listening ears there came the sound of the faint tinkle of a distant bell.

And then a fierce joy filled his heart. Again he had struck the scent, and as he looked about him and noted the surroundings, he could not help putting his thoughts into words.

"Aha," he muttered, "there will not be any chance for them to escape by an underground passage this time. They will be caged in this old house like so many rats in a trap. It is completely isolated, and the police can surround it so not a single man who is within will be able to escape, unless he can fly through the air like a bird, or creep down into the earth worm fashion.

There cannot be any failure this time; every man will be bagged!"

And it certainly appeared as if the detective was correct in this statement, for the house was too far from any other building to admit of any underground passage being constructed. All the police had to do was to surround the house, then break in the doors, and all within the building would surely be captured.

While indulging in these pleasant reflections the spy had been listening intently, his ear to the crack of the door, expecting to hear some one approaching in answer to the summons, but in this he was not destined to be gratified, for the first sound that he heard was a hoarse voice, which seemed to come out of the murky air at his side.

"Wot is it?" queried the voice.

The detective for a moment was surprised at the unexpected sound, but in an instant he guessed how it was.

A speaking tube, cunningly contrived so that it would not be visible from the outside, led from the side of the door to the cellar where the gang had their rendezvous.

The cellar had been selected in preference to a room on the ground-floor, so as to render it certain that no gleam of light, straying through a crevice, might betray to any passer-by that the old house was occupied.

The spy had been posted in regard to the nail-head on the upper part of the door, which rung the warning-bell in the cellar, and understood that his admittance would be challenged; for this he was fully prepared, but the manner in which the challenge had been given was a surprise.

The idea was a capital one, though, for in the event of danger, plenty of time would be afforded for escape.

"Keno!" replied the spy, for such he had been informed was the correct answer to the challenge.

"Wot's the number of yer card?" demanded the voice.

"No one is the best card in the pack."

"All right."

The detective had been a little anxious in regard to these signals, for the slightest error in them would upset everything.

It was certain now, though, that the information which he had received was correct.

In a moment the door opened, apparently worked by machinery from the lower apartment, for when he stepped over the threshold there wasn't any one visible.

And as soon as he stepped clear of the door, back it swung, closing with a click that revealed it was supplied with a spring lock.

The entryway was as dark as a pocket, but being posted as to how he should proceed, the spy groped his way through the darkness until he came to where the stairs led to the upper stories; underneath this stairway was the one that descended to the cellar.

The stairs were old, and creaked loudly under the weight of the detective as he descended.

At the foot of the stairs a stout door barred his way.

Rubbing his hand over the upper part of it, another nail-head, exactly like the one on the outer door, was encountered; this one, however, he did not press upon, but putting his thumb-nail against it, pushed it about a half an inch to the right, and the tinkle of a tiny bell immediately followed.

As the reader will perceive, the signals, by means of which entrance to the robber's retreat could be gained, were so carefully arranged that it was impossible for any one to stumble upon them by accident.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UNEXPECTED MOVEMENT.

"Hollo!" exclaimed a hoarse voice from within the cellar.

"Keno, number two," responded the disguised detective.

"Are you all correct?"

"Keno, number three."

This was the last of the signals, and the spy breathed easier, for he had been fearful that some part of the information which he had received might be incorrect, and that at the last moment a hitch would occur which would prevent him from gaining access to the secret retreat.

A little window in the door opened sud-

denly and a rough face glared out at the detective.

"Who is it?" was asked.

"Dutch John," the spy replied, imitating the manner of speaking of the ruffian, whose name he had assumed to the life.

"I thought it was you!" the warder exclaimed. "I told the boys so: I knew your voice." And then he hastened to throw open the door, allowing the disguised man to enter.

He found himself in a good-sized cellar; it extended under the whole building, and in no particular differed from an ordinary cellar.

There was a lot of boxes and barrels scattered around, and a coal-oil lantern, swinging from one of the center beams, dimly illuminated the scene.

A half-dozen rough-looking fellows were in the place, and as they all nodded familiarly when the detective entered, he at once came to the conclusion that they were pals of the man whom he was representing, so he returned the greeting.

"They couldn't keep yer, could they?" cried the man who attended to the door, shaking hands with the new-comer in the warmest manner. "I told the boys when I heered you were nabbed that it was a loss to a hen ag'in' your going up the river!"

"It's a mighty goot t'ing to have friends among der cops when you gets into der place for to get squeezed," the disguised detective replied, perfectly imitating the peculiar manner in which Dutch John always spoke.

"I reckoned you'd be here to-night, and I was jest a-saying so to the boys when you rung the bell."

"You knew I was out then?"

"Oh, yes; the perlice have been scouring all the flash kens in the city; there wasn't a boozing shop they didn't stick their beaks into, a-trying to smell you out. But they couldn't come it, eh?" And the speaker emphasized his delight at the non-success of the police by hitting the new-comer a whack on the back.

"Der cops don't know everything," the other replied. "Dey were big dunderheads for to t'ink I be fool enough for to hide mit a drinking-place, or go where der poys hang out. Oh, no; I know a trick worth two mit dat. I myself keep shady."

"You're right, rocks, for a hundred dollars! But, I say, you're jest in time. There's a boat going over to the cave, and as the captain is going to have an important business meeting to-night, you had better go along."

The disguised spy pricked up his ears, metaphorically speaking at this intelligence, although in a measure disappointed, for he had hoped to surprise the "captain," who of course was no other than the Romany Rye.

He had noticed that the leader of the band was not in the cellar the moment he entered, for the tall and imposing looking Gypsy Gentleman would have appeared like a king amid these common ruffians.

But the mention of the cave, access to which was gained by a boat, was something entirely unexpected.

In endeavoring to solve one mystery the spy had surely stumbled upon another, and this one probably the greatest of all.

The cave was evidently the head-quarters of the band, the sanctum sanctorum, as it were, of the Romany Rye, and as it was to be reached by boat it was very probable it was on the opposite bank of the river.

Good by then to the police schemes of surprising the ruffians in the old house, for there was not more than a good boat-load present, and the detective guessed that all of them were bound for the cave with the exception probably of a single man, a warden left to take charge of the door.

But when the spy reflected upon the matter he came to the conclusion that it was a lucky chance, for when he learned the secret of the cave it would be possible at one grand blow to exterminate the whole band.

"Of course, dat is what I come mit myself for," the false Dutch John replied.

"We'll git right off then, for I don't reckon that any more of the boys will be along to-night. Teddy, you stay here and attend to things."

One of the gang, a wiry-looking fellow with an evil face, gallows-bird written in every feature, who sat by the door, nodded, and, taking out his pipe, proceeded to fill and light it.

"That's right," the other remarked, "make yourself comfortable, for I reckon no one will trouble you to-night. Come along, boys, it's a dark hour for a pull on the river, but we're the kind of birds that are used to that."

All of the gang rose to their feet, prepared to follow their leader.

"Teddy, old chap, jest lend us the light of the glim until we are in the boat. It's as dark as a nigger's heel out there, and if we ain't careful some one on us will tumble inter the water, and I reckon there isn't a man in the gang who is anxious for a swim to-night."

"Not much!" responded one, and the rest nodded their heads as much as to say they agreed with the speaker.

Teddy took the lantern and going to the back wall of the cellar, opened a door in the stonework, and this door, being cunningly arranged and painted to look like the rest of the wall, was so good a piece of work that it defied detection, unless the searcher had been warned that it existed and went expressly in search of it.

Beyond the open door was a narrow passage, perhaps ten feet long, leading directly under the pier, and at its end was a landing float, rising and falling with the swell of the water, and to the float a good-sized row-boat was moored.

The spy was considerably astonished at this discovery and could not help reflecting how lucky it was that he had stumbled upon the secret, for if affairs had progressed in the way that had been originally arranged, when the police made their descent upon the place, not a man would have been captured, for, thanks to precautions which had been taken by the secret band to guard against a surprise, all within the cellar would have been warned in ample time that the police were at hand to enable them to escape by means of the boat, for the authorities had not the slightest suspicion that there was any outlet from the thieves' den to the river.

Thanks to the chapter of accidents, though, the disguised detective bid fair not only to get to the heart of the whole mystery, but to assume a position from which he could strike a blow which would destroy the entire gang at one fell swoop.

Aided by the light of the lantern the ruffians groped their way through the passage and clambered into the boat, the detective being the second man to embark.

"Be good to yourself, Mickey!" exclaimed the burly ruffian, who was a bright and shining light among the cracksmen of New York, being known as Red Terry, the Slugger, and in police circles reputed to be one of the most daring and desperate criminals in the country.

"You bet," responded the other, as he retreated into the cellar again, closing the door behind him, thus plunging the rest into utter darkness.

But this did not matter, for the men in the boat, well acquainted with the surroundings, propelled the craft to the head of the pier by catching hold of the spiles which supported the dock.

The boat shot out from under the head of the pier into the river.

The night was gradually growing lighter for the moon was on the eve of rising, and the outlines of the shore could be distinctly seen.

The tide was about half-flood and running quite swiftly, and Red Terry, noting the circumstances observed, as he took his place at the helm and adjusted the tiller while the rest bent to the oars:

"We'll have an easy time of it to-night, boys, for the tide will help us along, but I tell you it's a mighty hard pull when you ketch the ebb dead again' yer and the tide a-hustling down like a mill-race."

From this remark the spy guessed that the cave to which they were bound was some distance up the river, and there was hard-

ly a doubt that it was on the opposite shore.

No blow could be struck to night—that was utterly out of the question, for it was impossible to warn the police of the change in the programme, but the disguised man-hunter chuckled to himself as he reflected that in a few minutes more this fortunate accident would put him in possession of the great secret of the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye, for he had not the least doubt that the cave to which he was going was the last refuge of the gang, the haven of safety to which they fled when the blue-coated guardians pressed them inconveniently close.

He would learn the secret of the cave, and then take measures to capture all who dwelt in fancied safety there.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT LAST.

THE helmsman kept the bow of the boat slightly toward the opposite shore, so as to gain all the assistance he could from the tide and yet make his way gradually across the river.

It was a long pull, for the boat covered fully five miles before Red Terry headed her directly to the shore.

It was a wild and desolate spot.

The rocky range, known far and wide as the Palisades, rose abruptly, almost from the very edge of the river; there was not room between the cliff and the river's edge for any one to walk except at low tide, but at one place the rocks bent in a little, and some scrubby pines had sprung up, fringing a sort of cove.

Into this cove the boat ran.

"Low down, boys!" cautioned Red Terry, and then all in the boat crouched down, and the craft passed under the pine boughs and entered a little cave, the entrance to which was so completely masked by the clump of evergreen trees, that the keenest eyes could not have discovered its existence.

The cave seemed to be about twenty feet in diameter. In its center there was a small pool supplied by some springs which gushed out of the rocks, evidently containing water enough at all stages of the tide to float such a boat as the gang used.

Although the trees completely masked the entrance to the cave, yet light enough penetrated through their branches to enable the spy to see what the place looked like.

The moon by this time was up, and its bright beams had caused the demons of darkness to take flight.

There wasn't any one within the cave, and no signs, as far as the detective could see, that any one had ever been there.

In fact, as the pool in the center occupied two-thirds of the cave, the spy was puzzled to understand what use the gang could make of such narrow quarters.

"Tumble out, boys!" Red Terry commanded.

The ruffians obeyed, the helmsman being the last to leave the boat, and then they all took hold of the craft and dragged her out of the water up on the sand.

Then Terry went to the upper end of the cave, placed his hands upon a huge boulder that stood there, seemingly securely imbedded in the sand, and moved it to one side with the greatest ease.

The boulder was only a "dummy" rock, and yet so well got up that until a man tried his strength upon it discovery of the cheat was impossible.

When the dummy rock was removed, a hole about three feet in diameter was revealed, perfectly dark within and appearing merely like a cavity in the cliff.

Down on all-fours went Red Terry and into the hole he crawled; the detective, being next in order, followed his example, although he realized that by so doing he was taking his life in his hand.

Once within the stronghold of the Romany Rye escape was almost impossible if his disguise was penetrated, and his life would certainly pay the forfeit of his boldness.

But with that dogged determination—that heroic courage and utter disregard of consequences which seemed to mark him as being more than human—he went on without the slightest hesitation.

Before him was Red Terry and the secret haunt, behind him the rest of the band. Re-

treat was impossible, but even if there had been a means of escape open, the man-hunter would have disdained to avail himself of it, so determined was he to accomplish the destruction of the outlaw band.

The passage ran straight into the rock for about five feet, then bent abruptly to the left and six or eight feet further on entered a good-sized cave, a natural cavern, about ninety feet in diameter, and extending upward in the shape of a funnel, and as the air in the cave was perfectly pure and wholesome, it was plain that there must be an outlet above.

This was the secret lair of the Romany Rye.

The cave was illuminated by candles, stuck in rude candlesticks, supported by a pole forced into the clean, white sand which formed the floor of the cave.

All sorts of plunder were scattered about the place, showing that the rascals used the cave as a receptacle to stow away the valuables which they wrested from the good people in the city and its neighborhood, until they had a favorable opportunity to dispose of them.

There were six stout ruffians in the cave, amusing themselves with smoking, drinking and card-playing, and prominent among them was the leader of the gang, the Gypsy Gentleman, with his long black hair and beard.

The inmates of the place received their comrades in silence, merely nodding as they made their appearance, one by one, through the hole in the otherwise solid rock.

The new-comers helped themselves to seats, the disguised detective being careful to follow the example of the others.

And after they were all seated the Romany Rye, who had been sitting apart from the others smoking a cigar, cast it away, and clapped his hands sharply together.

This was evidently a signal to call the attention of the gang, for every man immediately stopped whatever he was doing and sat bolt upright and gazed at the chief of the gang.

"Boys, I've a few important words to say to you," observed the Gypsy Gentleman, speaking in a harsh, hoarse voice evidently assumed, and the spy, listening attentively, tried his best to see if he could recognize the tones for he suspected that the man who bore the title of the Romany Rye was no stranger to him.

But so completely did the outlaw chief succeed in disguising his voice that he puzzled the detective, and the latter was not able to decide whether he knew the man or not.

"Are you all paying attention, boys?" the chief asked.

Every one of them nodded.

"I have something to say that will make you open your eyes, I guess—something that will astonish you; but, before I begin, Red Terry, you and Bow-legged Mike guard the entrance to this place with your cocked revolvers, and shoot down any man who attempts to leave the cave until I give him permission."

Red Terry and Bow-legged Mike, who was a thick-set, determined-looking scoundrel, took the position assigned to them by the Gypsy Gentleman, drew their revolvers, and deliberately cocked them, the rest, meanwhile, looking at each other with wondering eyes.

And the Romany Rye while this movement was going on took advantage of the opportunity to cast a searching glance at the face of each and every man in the room. The spy detected the look and naturally the question arose to his lips:

"Am I suspected or discovered?"

"Now, boys, I tell you, I'm going to astonish you!" the chief declared. "You know we have been haunted lately by a regular devil in the shape of a detective. Where the fellow comes from is a mystery, and why the deuce he should pursue us so constantly is another, but he has hung to us so persistently that I came to the conclusion that either we must put him out of the way, or he would succeed in landing all of us in jail and in that event some of us most surely would have a chance to grin through the hangman's rope."

"Now I, for one, am not anxious to be boarded at the city's expense, or to put the State to the trouble of paying the hangman, so I came to the conclusion that the easiest way out of the difficulty would be to provide

this detective devil with a coffin and put him into it."

The sullen growl that arose from the throats of the members of the gang plainly showed that this idea was perfectly agreeable to them.

"The only trouble was to get at the fellow," continued the Romany Rye, "but thanks to a friend at court, I was enabled to put up a job that has ensnared my gentleman."

"I caused information to be sent to him in regard to our secret meeting-place in the old house by the river. The way it was worked one of the gang pretended to turn traitor and revealed all he knew to the police, and so tonight it was arranged that this bloodhound should, in disguise, penetrate into our haunt and at a certain time the police were to make a descent upon it; repeat the Houston street operation, in fact, bag all of us who happened to be in the place."

"But my little game was too deep to be guessed even by this demon, who has ensnared some of our best men. He is in the trap—here in our presence, and death will be his fate."

The detective perceiving that he was discovered was prompt to act.

He bounded against the stick upon which the candles were placed, hurled them off, and in a twinkling the cave was in utter darkness.

Then up on the air rose a chorus of oaths and yells, like as if the infernal regions had been transported into the cave and the raging demons were holding high carnival.

Pistol-shots followed, and then there came an awful explosion.

In one corner of the cave, close by the entrance was a keg of powder. In the confusion this had been kicked over and broken open, and a fiery pistol had falling into it, caused an explosion.

The whole front of the cave was blown out. The secret haunt was a secret no longer.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ACTOR'S JUDGMENT.

It was an extremely perplexing question that the girl had asked, and Mortimer hesitated for a moment before he attempted to reply.

The girl watched the play of his expressive features earnestly.

"It is not an easy subject upon which to give judgment," she remarked.

"No; upon my word, it is not; and I fear the more one deliberates in regard to it, the greater becomes the difficulty."

"Believe me, I do not ask your advice out of mere idle curiosity," she remarked, and the young actor noticed that her voice trembled as she spoke. "The question is a vital one, and upon the decision the happiness of a whole life may hang."

"Yes, I can understand that easily enough, and that is why I do not wish to answer rashly and upon the impulse of the moment, without giving the subject due deliberation," Mortimer observed.

"If I were to reply immediately, I should say most decidedly, under no circumstances would a woman be justified in wrecking her whole life by marrying a man whom she felt she did not love. Of course, I am aware that the world's answer to that opinion would be that hundreds of women do just so every day; that there is very little real love before marriage, and that if a woman is not deeply in love with any one, she is acting a prudent part in accepting the love of the first man who offers—provided that he is not absolutely hateful to her—that has means to furnish her with a comfortable home."

"Yes, I have heard that argument advanced a hundred times," she replied slowly, and then gave utterance to a deep sigh.

"To my mind it is no argument at all, unless you rank a woman with a horse or a dog, whose destiny it is to be sold to the highest bidder, for such a marriage is neither more nor less than a sale."

"The woman sells herself for the sake of a home, and the man buys, either because he is lured onward by a will-o'-the-wisp sort of passion, or because he covets her as he would covet any other beautiful ornament, which he thinks would adorn his home."

"Something the same idea, you know, as that of the Roman conquerors who entered the imperial city with their captives tied to their chariot wheels, 'to grace a Roman holiday.'"

A shudder ran through the slight figure of the girl.

His words described the thoughts which were in her mind.

Mortimer's quick eyes noticed her agitation.

"Forgive me if my words have given you pain," he hastened to say.

"In such a matter one must speak plainly or not at all."

"Oh, certainly, I understand that, and I am grateful for your counsel. The ideas which you expressed are about the same as the ones I have entertained."

"But in this case there is something more to be considered," Mortimer remarked.

"It is not merely a question whether the woman shall marry a man whom she does not love to oblige her family, who consider that it will be a good match—but in this matter the question of gratitude comes in."

"By consenting to the union she renders a great service to the people who had befriended her from childhood."

"And here comes in a chance for special pleading. One might say that if these folks had not befriended her, Heaven would have raised up other protectors, and so, therefore, the debt of gratitude owed is not so great after all."

"Oh, no, no, I do not think it ought to be considered in that light!" the girl exclaimed, hastily.

"No more do I; that is a piece of sophistry for which I haven't the least bit of sympathy," the young actor observed, earnestly.

"Let us admit that the debt exists and give it the full amount of credit, but still I do not think that it is quite fair to say that the girl really owes her life to the people who befriended her."

"The world is not so bad as to allow a helpless child to starve to death in the streets."

"I think I allow all that ought to be allowed when I say, to her supposed parents the girl owes dutiful obedience, and if adversity overtook them, it would be only right that she should almost work her fingers to the bone to keep them from want, but when it comes to the girl wrecking all her life for their sake, then I cannot bring myself to think she is called upon to do it."

"I must admit it does not seem right to me but then I was afraid I was not judging the case impartially," the girl remarked, slowly.

"Well, I think I can render a fair and unbiased opinion. Now then, we must put sentiment aside to a certain degree and ask the question, what did it cost these parents to adopt the child?"

"To reach an exact result we cannot calculate in any other way."

The girl nodded her head.

In his strong, common-sense way he was getting right at the heart of the matter.

"I assume that they were wealthy and probably childless."

"They were."

"And desiring a little one in the house they adopted the girl in question."

"Yes."

"It was for their own pleasure and amusement they took the child; we will admit that they pitied the orphan girl and wished to shield her from the rude buffets of a rough and unfeeling world, but beyond the expenditure of money, which to those who have plenty amounts to little, the child cost them almost nothing."

"They made no sacrifices on her behalf."

"True, very true," the girl murmured, thoughtfully.

"By what right then do they now expect—or are willing, to use a milder term, to allow her to perform an act which may make her wretched for life?"

"Put the question to yourself—would you under like circumstances ask a child whom you had reared, as this girl was reared, to make such a sacrifice for you?"

"Indeed I would not!" answered the girl, impulsively.

"There is the whole case in a nutshell," the young actor observed.

"The Golden Rule is a pretty safe one to guide our conduct in life," Mortimer continued.

"And under some circumstances it is wise to alter it somewhat. Do as you would be done by and don't ask any one to do anything for you that you would not be willing to do yourself."

"Yes, it seems to me that is the proper way to regulate one's life," the girl replied.

"In my mind there isn't the least doubt about it, and the people who adopted the girl have no right to ask, or expect, her to make such a sacrifice." The debt due by her is not sufficient to warrant any expectation that it should be paid in such a manner. If adversity threatens to overtake them, then it would be the duty of the girl to do all in her power for them—to labor in the most diligent manner to help them to a support, but to a woman of sensibility I should think death would be preferable to a life with a man whom she felt she could never love."

"Such an existence would be but a living lie."

"Yes, it would be truly horrible," the girl murmured.

"Excuse the question, but is this not a personal affair?" Mortimer asked.

"I presume I am indiscreet in putting the query, but I am a blunt, off-hand fellow by nature, and believe that a frank and open course is always the best."

The girl hesitated for a moment, cast down her eyes and then replied:

"I do not see any good reason why I should conceal the truth from you. I am the girl and it is my own case in regard to which I have asked your advice."

"Miss, I have spoken frankly and given you the same advice which I would have given unto a sister. It is not right that you should make such a sacrifice and most surely you break no law, either human or divine, by declining."

"You are right!" she exclaimed, firmly.

"I did not think I ought to consent, for I am so strongly opposed to it that, heaven knows, if a choice was offered me I would gladly spend all the rest of my days in the confines of a jail rather than accept the splendid misery which would surely come from such a union."

At this point the girl happened to glance out of the carriage window.

"It is time for me to alight," she said.

"I hope this will not be our last meeting," the young actor hastened to say.

"Oh, no, I have your address and I will write to you," she answered.

"Of course I cannot tell what will happen, but I fear that the determination to which I have come will result in my being obliged to leave the roof which so long has sheltered me."

An idea flashed across the mind of the young actor and he hastened to put it into words.

"If such a thing should happen have you determined where you will go?" he asked.

"Indeed I have not; and I have so little knowledge of the great world that I presume I will be puzzled in regard to the matter."

"I know a nice, motherly woman who supports her little family by taking a few boarders and she will be glad to receive you, I know."

"In her house you will find a safe haven of refuge until you have time to look about you and see what you can do."

"You are very kind indeed, and I will gladly accept your offer. I have never had to look out for myself, but I presume there must be something for me to do by means of which I can make a living. I have received an excellent musical education, and my teachers were always kind enough to assure me that I possessed genius in that line and I suppose I could earn my bread by teaching."

"Oh, there isn't any doubt but what you could get along!" Mortimer exclaimed, confidently.

"Please tell the driver to stop, I must get out here," she said.

Mortimer signaled to the driver and the carriage halted.

"I am so much obliged to you for your advice and I assure you I prize it highly."

"Now, good-by, but we will soon meet again."

She gave him her hand, and then alighted.

"Are you not afraid?" he asked.

"Oh, no, I am quite near home, good-by!" and then she hurried away.

CHAPTER XXX.

A PERSISTENT SUITOR.

ON this particular night that the interview between the young actor and the mysterious young lady took place, as detailed in our last chapter, Judge Abraham Bullwinkle staid late at his club. He and some cronies had discussed the state of the nation and decided what ought to be done to save the country, so the judge did not get home until about midnight.

To his amazement he found that Ophelia had not retired, but was occupied with a book in the sitting-room.

"Hello! not in bed yet?" the judge inquired as he helped himself to a chair.

"No, I have not felt sleepy and as I have been thinking deeply in regard to the matter about which you spoke to me the other day, I thought I would remain up until you returned home so we might come to an understanding in regard to the matter."

The old gentleman sat and stared at his daughter for fully a minute before he spoke.

The judge was not a man noted for his quickness of apprehension, and when on the bench had borne the reputation of being one of the slowest of judges, but on this occasion there was something in the girl's face and manner which conveyed to him, dull as he was, the intelligence that the decision she had reached was not a favorable one as far as his plans were concerned.

Like all weak and irresolute men, however, he shrunk from listening to unwelcome news and now he attempted to postpone the communication which Ophelia evidently desired to make.

"It is rather late to-night," he remarked.

"Don't you think you had better let the matter rest until morning?"

Two hectic flushes appeared in the girl's cheeks.

She was feverish with excitement and felt that she could not possibly postpone the delivery of her decision until morning.

"No, no, father, it is not best to wait until to-morrow!" she exclaimed, hastily.

"I have reflected deeply upon the subject and although I have tried by every means in my power to look with favorable eyes upon this union which you have proposed, yet I find it impossible for me so to do."

"The thought of wedding Mr. Gloster is horrid, and I feel I can never bring myself to consent."

The judge looked bewildered.

The girl had always been so docile—so perfectly willing to agree to whatever in the past had been proposed to her, that this unexpected non-compliance annoyed him.

"Mr. Gloster is a perfect gentleman, I am sure," he remarked, in a sort of bewildered way, as if he didn't know exactly what to say.

"Yes, yes, I admit that!" she replied, excitedly. "I am not saying a single word against the gentleman."

"He is agreeable—he is rich; almost any girl ought to be proud to be honored by the attentions of such a man, but I am not."

"Why, father, this union is so distasteful to me that I would rather die than marry him!"

Bullwinkle stared at this passionate outbreak.

He was one of those peculiar men, who above all things in this world hated what he called a "scene."

"Oh, well, well, we will not say anything more about it," he hastened to say.

But Ophelia's mind was too full to allow her speech to be checked in this manner.

"I know that it is perfectly awful for me to act in this way, but I cannot help it!" she exclaimed.

"Gladly would I comply with your wishes, and I have struggled and struggled to bring myself to look upon Mr. Gloster in the light of my future husband, but I cannot do it. It is an impossibility."

"Never mind—never mind; don't say anything about it," the judge observed, soothingly, perceiving that the girl was working herself up into an excited state.

"Of course, under the peculiar circumstances, I would have been pleased if you could have made up your mind to accept Mr. Gloster, but there isn't any doubt that I will be able to arrange the matter in some way."

"There is an old proverb, you know, 'when one door shuts, another opens.'"

"So don't allow the matter to worry you at all. I am sorry now that I spoke about it; but as I knew you were not accepting attentions from any gentleman, being heart-free, I thought there might be a chance for Mr. Gloster."

A bright blush swept rapidly over the face of the girl, but as the judge was gazing, reflectively, up at the ceiling, he did not notice it.

In fact, Bullwinkle was rather heavy-eyed; he had taken quite a number of social glasses with his chums at the club, and now was beginning to feel the effects of his libations.

"It is a little disappointment to me, but such things will happen in this uncertain world of ours," he remarked, in an owly sort of way.

"But we will not say anything more about the matter. I will take an early opportunity to inform Mr. Gloster that the affair cannot be arranged, and then I will look about me to see what can be done."

"I am in a rather tight place, financially speaking, but I've no doubt I shall be able to find some way to get out of it."

"A man can never tell about such matters until he tries."

"I am ready to do all in my power to help you!" the girl cried, impulsively.

"Neither poverty nor work will have any terrors for me. Whatever my hand finds to do that will I do with all my might."

The judge nodded and blinked like an owl brought suddenly into the light, for, despite the gravity of the subject under discussion, it was as much as he could do to keep awake.

"Yes, yes; you're a good girl, but don't be alarmed; we'll be able to pull through some way; but we must go to bed now, for I am so tired that it is hard work for me to keep my eyes open."

This ended the conversation.

Ophelia was somewhat astonished that the judge took the matter so easily, for she had expected that he would have attempted to argue with her and endeavor to get her to alter her resolution; but Bullwinkle, despite his dullness, was wise enough to see she had made up her mind, and that it would only be a waste of time to try to induce her to change.

He was not in a condition to give much attention to the matter that evening, but after a night's rest had cleared his head, he came to the conclusion that he ought to acquaint Gloster with the girl's decision as soon as possible.

So, on his way down-town he stopped at that gentleman's house.

Gloster had just breakfasted, and was enjoying a cigar in the library.

Judge Bullwinkle explained the matter to him, expressing his regret as he did so that his daughter had seen fit to take such a whim into her head.

To his astonishment, the gentleman made light of the girl's decision.

"My dear judge!" he exclaimed, "I am not at all surprised at what you have told me. I have had considerable experience with womankind, and have come to know that they are about all creatures of impulse."

"Man acts by calculation, and carefully examines the ground before he comes to a decision. A woman, on the contrary, jumps to a conclusion, and is just as likely to decide wrongly as otherwise, and, in nine cases out of ten, is apt to change her mind in regard to the matter and come to an entirely different conclusion, without any more reason for the second decision than for the first."

This confident assertion rather staggered Judge Bullwinkle, because he was not inclined to believe that Ophelia would act in this way, and he said as much to Gloster.

"It may be that in this case it is as you think," the other replied.

"But, my dear judge, I have seen young ladies act so strangely in just such matters that I am inclined to be skeptical, and, with your permission, I will still endeavor to win the lady's hand and heart."

"Oh, certainly, I haven't any objection to your trying and in fact you have my best wishes for your success, but I fear you are undertaking a task beyond your powers."

And with this remark Judge Bullwinkle took his departure.

In a small inner room, just beyond the

library, the secretary Robert Ainsworth had sat and listened to the conversation, and when the judge took his departure he made his appearance.

"Well, Bob, did you hear what the old donkey said?" Gloster asked, evidently irritated.

"Oh, yes, that nice little game of yours is gone to eternal smash, as these Yankees say," Ainsworth replied, as he helped himself to a chair.

"The door was ajar so none of the conversation escaped me. By the way, do you think the old fellow has any suspicions that anything is wrong?"

"Oh, no, not the slightest! It is merely a whim of the girl, that's all," the chief rascal replied.

"I knew, of course, that she wasn't madly in love with me, but I thought her father would have influence enough to coax her into the match, particularly, as there isn't any other fellow in the case whom she likes better than your humble servant."

"You see I have had a spy in the house for some time, put there solely to keep watch of the girl, and, as affairs have turned out, it is lucky I took the precaution, for it will aid my purpose now."

"I have determined to get the fair Ophelia for she is too rich a prize to escape me, and if she can't be won by fair means then foul must answer. I'll hatch some scheme to compromise the girl and then she will be glad to marry me."

The other expressed his belief that the plan was a feasible one and then they began to scheme.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN PURSUIT.

THE explosion was a terrible one and hardly a man in the cavern escaped without a wound.

Three were killed outright, being struck by heavy pieces of stone thrown down by the force of the explosion.

The Gypsy Gentleman, the leader of the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye seemed to bear a charmed life however, for though he was prostrated by the shock he rose to his feet uninjured.

"The spy—the cursed spy!" he exclaimed, as soon as he got upon his feet and recovered the use of his voice.

"Don't let him escape!"

And as the smoke cleared slowly away the ruffians who had not been disabled by the explosion, grasped their weapons, hunted until they found some of the candles and then relighted them.

Then they searched eagerly amid the ruins for the Demon Detective who had so boldly penetrated into their stronghold.

The search was a fruitless one, though, for not the slightest sign of the bloodhound could they discover.

"Do you suppose that he is buried under some one of these stones that have been shaken down?" Red Terry the Slugger asked, as he surveyed the heavy masses of rocks which had been torn loose by the explosion.

"He may be under some one of them; let us examine," the bandit chief remarked.

But the most careful search failed to reveal any trace of the spy.

"We have been wasting time here!" the outlaw leader exclaimed.

"The fellow is a devil and bears a charmed life. He evidently escaped uninjured and took advantage of the confusion caused by the explosion to escape in the darkness."

"In that case he can't be far off!" Red Terry exclaimed, "and we ought to be able to overhaul him."

"I am afraid we have wasted too much time," the chief replied.

"While we have been fooling among these rocks he has been giving leg bail."

"Mighty bad road over the rocks in the darkness," Red Terry suggested.

"That's true!" chimed in another of the band.

"And then he won't find any place where the cliff can be climbed for a mile in either direction," the Gypsy Gentleman observed.

"Oh, we ought to be able to catch him!" Red Terry cried, and the rest assented eagerly.

"Divide into two parties, one to go up while the other goes down and if he is lurk-

ing along the shore you will be sure to hunt him down," the leader remarked.

"And if you find the scoundrel don't fail to make an end of him, for this devil is the most dangerous man that ever struck in on our track."

A chorus of assents came from the rest at this statement.

"I'd like to go with you, boys, and take part in the chase, but I can't spare the time for I have business to attend to across the river, but you don't need me, for there's enough of you to settle the scoundrel's hash if you are lucky enough to run across him."

"Yes, yes!" cried the ruffians, and they grasped their weapons as they spoke and glared around them in a way that plainly showed that the spy, who had so boldly penetrated into their stronghold, would receive no mercy at their hands if they were fortunate enough to come across him.

"I'll row across the river myself so as not to deprive you of a man," the Gypsy Gentleman remarked.

"Hunt the scoundrel down if you can and don't hesitate to kill him without mercy if you find him, for it is mighty little peace that any of our band will have while this bloodhound is in the land of the living."

The outlaws swore that they would most certainly kill the spy if they could succeed in discovering him and then the Romany Rye got into a boat, pulled out into the stream, disappearing in the darkness.

The ruffians divided into two parties, one commanded by Red Terry, the other by Bow-legged Mike.

There was a hot discussion for a few minutes in regard to whether the fugitive had gone up or down the river, and the majority were inclined to the belief that the bloodhound, in endeavoring to escape, would be more apt to go down than up, for the city lay in that direction, and he would be apt to think he would not have so far to go before striking a road which would take him to the top of the cliff.

Terry was the leader of the men who held a contrary opinion.

"He'll reckon that we will think jest as you fellows do, and as he ain't anxious to be caught, he'll scoot up the river instead of down, thinking to throw us off the track by that dodge. So you kin go down and we'll go up, and I'm ready to lay you five dollars to a smack in the jaw that we'll run afoul of him first."

"If we stand chinning here much longer I reckon none of us will catch him," Bow-legged Mike observed.

There was wisdom in this remark, and the hunt began immediately.

We will follow the footsteps of the party headed by Red Terry, for that shrewd-witted scoundrel was correct in his surmise that the Demon Detective would endeavor to throw pursuers off the track by taking a different direction from the one he would be most likely to select.

Fox had been prostrated by the force of the shock when the powder had exploded, but not at all injured.

And the moment he found that the front of the cavern had been blown out, so that a way of escape was open, he hastened to get out of the dangerous predicament in which he had become involved.

Of course, now that the exposure had come, he realized that he had been led purposely into a trap.

"There is a traitor at head-quarters," he muttered to himself after he had gained the open air and hastened over the rocks, scrambling along in the semi-darkness as best he could, for the moon was partially obscured.

"This was a plot to compass my death and the information in regard to the secret haunt of the band was given for the express purpose of entrapping me."

"I shall have to find out who it was from whom the chief procured the information, and then I will interview the party in a way that will be apt to astonish him."

That he would be certain to be pursued the moment the ruffians recovered from the effects of the shock, Fox felt sure; but now that he was at liberty, being well-armed, he did not feel any apprehensions in regard to the result if the outlaws succeeded in overtaking him.

The fugitive hurried onward for a good half-mile, until he came to a spot where the

water washed in so close to the cliff that it barred the way.

By this time the moon escaped from the clouds, and by its light the Demon Detective was able to examine the surroundings.

The tide was on the flood, and from the formation of the cliff the fugitive came to the conclusion that he would have to swim about a hundred feet to pass the barrier.

"But then if I do that," he soliloquized, as he debated with himself in regard to the situation, "there's no certainty that I will find any path, by means of which I can scale the cliff, for a long distance."

"I am not much acquainted with the west bank of the Hudson, but as near as I can remember there are not many breaks in this rocky wall, and what few there is are widely separated."

"If I am pursued, this is as good a place to make a stand as I can find, and with my revolvers I can easily hold my own against six or eight of these scoundrels."

The Demon Detective was right as to the capabilities of the place in regard to offering a successful defense.

There were some huge rocks, each one ample enough to afford shelter to a man, scattered about, just below the point where the tide surged into the base of the cliff, so it was not possible for any attack to be made in the rear.

"If it comes to a fight, I can make as good a one here as in any place I ever saw," Fox observed as he sat upon a rock, drew forth his revolvers, and carefully examined their working, so as to be sure they were in perfect order.

By this time the clouds, which had partially obscured the moon, were all gone, and the Demon Detective noticing this remarked:

"If the scoundrels do track me, and we have a fight, we will have no reason to complain in regard to the light."

For fifteen or twenty minutes he sat, almost as motionless as a statue, and then to his ears came the sounds for which he had been listening.

Down the river, scrambling over the rocks, were a party of men, gradually approaching nearer and nearer.

"I'm in for a fight, and no mistake!" the Demon Detective muttered, as he noticed that the noise was growing more and more distinct, some proof that the party were advancing.

He quitted the position which he had occupied, and crouched behind a rock, selecting one which stood on an elevation considerably higher than the rest.

To the right of the first rock was a second, and by peering through the space between the two—it was only about an inch—he could command a view of the approach of his pursuers.

Within five minutes the ruffians were in sight.

There were just six of them, all well armed, for the Demon Detective could plainly distinguish the glint of the moonbeams on the revolvers, which they carried openly displayed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A BATTLE ROYAL.

THE persecution that he had undergone had transformed Nick Fox into a demon.

He did not believe that the sentiment known as pity had a lodging-place within his breast.

The men who were approaching were scoundrels of the deepest dye as he well knew, yet, somehow, he hesitated to fire upon them without warning.

Desperate and revengeful as he was, yet there was a sentiment of fair-play still lingering in his heart and he could not bring himself to slay these men without giving them a chance for their lives.

On their part as the pursuers came closer to the spot where the fugitive had taken shelter, they noticed the peculiar formation of the cliff-side and immediately understood that it must have been impossible for the fugitive to proceed beyond that point unless he had taken to the water.

"Look sharp, boys!" Red Terry continued. "Our bird must be near at hand now, sneaking down among the rocks, somewhere."

The outlaws came slowly to a halt, peering anxiously ahead, expecting to see the figure

of the fugitive concealed in some dark recess.

They suspected that he was armed and they were not anxious to expose themselves to danger.

Red Terry, who was gifted with a great deal of natural generalship, noticed the big rocks at the edge of the narrow way, just where the water made into the cliffs, and suspected that the man whom they were hunting so eagerly was concealed in that neighborhood.

And the ruffian appreciated the difficulties of the situation, too.

If the spy was well-armed—and there wasn't much doubt on this point—it would be no easy job to capture him.

Taking advantage of the irresolution displayed by the outlaws in thus coming to a halt, Nick Fox rose from behind the rock which had concealed him from their sight.

He displayed a revolver in each hand and the ruffians stared as they beheld the moonbeams play on the shining surface of the polished metal.

"Keep back or I will have to fit some of you for pine coffins!" he warned.

The man meant what he said and the revolvers which he flourished gave due emphasis to his words.

The ruffians looked at each other, and Red Terry, who was a good judge of human nature, saw that the determined aspect of the man had made an impression upon his associates and that the most of them were not anxious to test the prowess of the stranger.

He judged that it would be wise to say a few words in regard to the matter.

"See here, boys, we mustn't let this cursed spy escape, you know!" he exclaimed.

"If we don't make an end to him he will be apt to settle our hash for us. He knows too much to be allowed to go free and we must kill him!"

"It is easy enough to say that we must," one of the ruffians growled.

"But it seems to me that this 'ere contract will be a mighty big one."

"Ain't we six to one?" demanded Red Terry angrily.

"How much more odds do you want?"

"Oh, that is all right, but the cuss has got six-shooters and I reckon he will be apt to use 'em too, if we attempted to close in on him," one of the gang remarked, grumblingly.

"If we make a rush together it will confuse him and some one of us will be sure to hit him," Red Terry argued.

"Maybe we could work the trick that way," one of the fellows remarked, but two or three of the others shook their heads, plainly indicating that they felt doubtful in regard to the matter.

"The spy has got to be killed and there's no two ways about it!" the outlaw leader declared, impatiently.

"We can't allow the fellow to escape; he knows too much. I'm going for him if there isn't one of you with sand enough to follow my lead. If there is any man who is afraid of a bit of lead and would rather die by the hangman's rope, well and good. Let that man stay out of the fight, and then in the future we will know just how to take him!"

With the matter thus strongly presented to them not a man dared to hang back, although at least one-half of them would have preferred to be "counted out."

"Now, boys, we want to scatter as much as possible and surround the scoundrel as well as the lay of the land will let us, so that when we make the rush we will be apt to confuse him."

"Scatter, boys, and don't close in on him until you get the word from me!"

With some of the party it was not necessary to give this warning for if they had had their way about it they most certainly would not have closed in on the spy at all.

But they were ashamed to show the white feather in the presence of their companions and so they prepared for the fight, although they had no stomach for the conflict.

The moment the ruffians began their movement the Demon Detective understood what their object was and he felt compelled to give them a last warning for knowing himself to be a dead shot with the revolver he felt certain that, protected as he was by the rocks, he could not only beat off the attack, but also disable the majority of his assailants.

"Take care what you are about!" he warned. "I am a desperate man and I give you fair notice that if you attempt to attack me I shall shoot to kill."

"You are all scoundrels and deserve to die, but I hate to kill you red handed in your guilt; I would prefer to give you time for repentance—time to make your peace with heaven, and not send you to your last account with all your crimes upon your guilty heads."

"Perhaps too, if you are not untimely cut off, some of you may repent and live better lives, and so, though I have sworn to hunt down and destroy this murderous band to which you belong, yet now I am willing to give you a chance for your lives."

"Depart, reform, and in the future you need not dread the bloodhounds of the law."

But Fox might as well have addressed his exhortation to the stones which surrounded him, as far as making any impression went, as to the hardened ruffians who were so eager to do him violence.

During all the time that he was speaking the members of the outlaw gang had been moving to their positions ready to begin the attack, and the moment he finished the speech Red Terry took deliberate aim at him and fired.

The Demon Detective though had the eyes of a hawk, and noticing the movement of the ruffian anticipated what he was about to do.

So as Red Terry leveled his revolver and fired Fox dodged down behind the rocks and the bullet whistled harmlessly over his head.

Simultaneously with the discharge of his pistol the ruffian yelled:

"Go for him, boys, kill the cursed spy!"

On came the outlaws in a desperate rush, all shouting fiercely at the top of their voices, as though they hoped, after the Chinese fashion, to scare their enemy to death.

Thanks to the protection afforded by the rocks the Demon Detective had no fears in regard to the result of the contest.

He waited until the assailants came within fifty feet of him and then, rising suddenly from behind the stony rampart, opened fire upon them.

His first shot dropped one of the ruffians stone dead in his tracks; he had fired at the man nearest to him; the most desperate fellow in the gang, the foremost in the assault.

His second bullet, following so quickly upon the first leaden missile that the report of the discharge seemed but an echo of the previous shot, struck a second ruffian in the shoulder and with a bitter oath the fellow stumbled and fell forward upon his face, writhing in agony.

The downfall of the two foremost men checked the advance at once.

The ruffians came to a halt and discharged their revolvers, but as only the upper part of the bloodhound's body could be seen, the rest being hidden, and protected by the rocks behind which he stood, they were not afforded as good a target as they presented, and so, though some of the bullets came dangerously near to him, yet not a single one even scratched him.

Twice again his revolver spoke, and two more men went down, one stricken to death upon the instant and the other mortally wounded.

The ruffians gave him shot for shot, but the bloodhound seemed to bear a charmed life for the bullets whistled harmlessly by him.

No wonder that the baffled ruffians began to believe that he was something more than mortal, and that the name of the Demon Detective was exactly suited to him.

But with the fall of the second, two of the assailants—the pair who had escaped unhurt—became panic-stricken.

And with good reason, too, for if the desperate man at bay had succeeded in killing or disabling four out of the six foes who had attacked him, what earthly chance did two stand?

Plainly, two could not hope to conquer where six had failed.

Red Terry, having more of the bull-dog about him than his companions, would have continued to fight, for his blood was up and he hungered for the death of the man who had so easily "laid out" his associates; but

when his companion in wild dismay took to his heels, the contagion of fear seized upon him and he too fled.

There is an old Spanish proverb, "Build a bridge of silver for a fleeing enemy," but in this instance the Demon Detective did not act in accordance with that idea at all, for he sprung from behind the rocks and gave chase.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

NEW FOES.

ALL the bloodthirstiness that there was in the nature of the wronged and desperate man had been called up by the attack which the gang had made upon him.

Before the fight commenced his good angel had pleaded with him—and successfully, as the reader knows—to give these wretched, crime-stained men a chance for their lives.

But since they had rejected his offer with disdain, all the savageness in his being had been roused, and now he hungered for blood.

Four of the six he had disabled, and now that the two who escaped unharmed had taken to flight, panic-stricken at his prowess, he rushed after them with all a demon's fury, determined that they should not escape.

He had sworn to exterminate the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye—to bring to justice or kill with his own hand every man who belonged to the criminal league, from the meanest ruffian in the gang up to the outlaw leader, the notorious Gypsy Gentleman.

Red Terry and his companion fled at their topmost speed when they discovered that the bloodhound had forsaken his fortress and sallied forth in pursuit.

"Fear lent them wings," as the old saying has it, and they made wonderfully good time over the rocks; but the avenger was more fleet of foot and gained upon them.

The ruffians soon perceived this, and endeavored to increase their pace, but, to their dismay, they found that the bloodhound was getting nearer and nearer to them.

There was only one chance to escape as far as they could see.

The other portion of the gang who had proceeded down the river would surely have their attention excited by the pistol-shots, and they would understand that the first detachment had succeeded in finding the fugitive, and the result had been a fight.

Of course, it was only natural for the fleeing ruffians to believe that when their companions understood that the disguised spy had been unearthed they would turn and hasten to the spot as soon as possible.

The Demon Detective had got fairly within range, and bloodthirsty as he was, hesitated to shoot the running men in the back, therefore he called upon them to surrender.

"Halt or you are dead men!" he yelled.

But neither one of the two paid the least attention to the demand.

They had been placed in a similar position several times in their lives before and yet had lived to tell the tale.

A half-a-dozen times at least, since Red Terry and his companion had entered upon a life of crime, officers of the law had come upon them while engaged in some felonious operations and they, taking refuge in flight, had been called upon by the "minion of the law" to surrender under pain of being shot, but each and every time they had refused to obey the summons, preferring to continue their fight at the risk of being shot by their pursuers.

And as they had never yet sustained material damage they were not inclined to yield to the spy's demand on this occasion.

Then too the idea that they, two of the most experienced and boldest cracksmen in the country, should be forced to surrender to a single man seemed to be entirely out of the question, and so they did not pay the least attention to the demand.

The Demon Detective, feeling confident that he held the lives of the ruffians in his hand, resolved to give them one more chance.

"For the last time I call upon you to surrender!" he cried.

"Your lives are at my mercy but I don't want to kill you in cold blood!"

"The scoundrell!" ejaculated Red Terry to his companion as they raced onward at the top of their speed.

"What wouldn't I give to get a fair chance at him?"

"I'd cut his heart out!" responded the other in a hoarse voice, almost exhausted by the violent exertions which he had been forced to make.

"For the last time I call upon you to surrender or take the consequences!" cried Fox, preparing to fire.

Hardly had the words escaped his lips though, when the detachment of ruffians, commanded by Bow-legged Mike, who had gone down the river, made their appearance, coming around a pile of massive rocks which had masked their approach.

A yell of astonishment escaped from their lips when they beheld their comrades running for their lives with the spy in hot pursuit.

But a more welcome sight than the appearance of their ruffianly comrades never met the eyes of the fleeing men.

With this assistance at hand they fancied that they were saved from the danger that threatened them.

More than that, for they could now turn the tables upon the hated bloodhound who had given them so severe a lesson.

And on his part the Demon Detective realized that he had now to face a danger fully as great as the one which he had previously met and triumphed over.

Then the odds had been six to one, now it was eight.

Eight well-armed, desperate men all eager for his destruction, the more so on account of his victory over their comrades, as it required no detailed account of what had taken place for Bow-legged Mike and his men to understand when they saw Red Terry and his companion running at the top of their speed with the bloodhound in net pursuit, that the six men who had ascended the river's bank intent upon discovering the disguised detective had succeeded in ferreting him out, but instead of being able to put an end to him as they had intended, the bloodhound, single-handed, had whipped the party.

With loud cries of rage the ruffians hastened to the assistance of their comrades.

The Demon Detective realized that quick work was necessary, and he hesitated no longer in firing upon the fugitives.

As the members of that Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye had discovered to their cost the Demon Detective was an expert pistol-shot with both right and left hands.

It made no difference which hand held the revolver, the bullets flew true to the mark.

He came to an abrupt halt, took deadly aim at the running men and then fired.

A howl of rage came from the throats of the ruffians as they beheld the result of the shots, for both of the bullets had taken effect.

Red Terry was down, badly wounded, and his companion ruffian had been shot right through the heart, pitching forward on his face, stone dead, almost on the instant.

And then the bloodhound proceeded to coolly recharge his weapons.

His pistols were self-cockers of the latest and most improved pattern, and it required a few seconds only to remove the used cartridges and replace them with fresh ones.

The ruffians, rushing onward, filling the air with their cries of vengeance, beheld this movement with amazement, for it plainly indicated that the detective, undismayed by their numbers, intended to hold his ground and give battle.

And it was true.

The blood of the man, whose life had been so cruelly wrecked, was at fever heat.

For the moment he was really and truly a demon, and recked no more of danger than if he was an immortal being, possessed of everlasting life.

And this time, too, the blood had so mounted into his brain that he scorned to seek shelter amid the rocks which were near at hand, but stood right in the open square where he had halted to make sure of the two men whom he had so neatly dropped.

When his revolvers were recharged, like a statue the Demon Detective stood and waited for the onset of his new foes.

Despite their superior numbers, the firm attitude assumed by the detective produced a decided effect upon the ruffians.

When they first caught sight of him they had rushed on with loud cries, expecting he would in dismay turn and flee.

When he shot down Red Terry and his companion ruffian, for a few moments their rage was so great that they hastened their speed for the purpose of taking summary vengeance upon the daring bloodhound.

But by the time they came nearly within revolver range, and witnessed the detective prepare his weapons for a conflict, and understood that, so far from being dismayed by their numbers, he intended to hold his ground and give battle, their courage began to fail, and consequently their speed to slacken.

If this devil of a detective, as in their hearts they termed him, had been able to whip their six comrades—and they hadn't the least doubt that he had either killed or disabled the four absent men, as he had in their presence struck down Red Terry and his pal—why shouldn't he be able to "lay them out?"

Bow-legged Mike, the leader of this gang, was no such man as Red Terry.

There was very little of the bull-dog about him, and he was a firm believer in the old adage "discretion is the better part of valor."

So, when he noticed that the rest were slackening their pace, preparing to halt before they should come within range of the detective's deadly revolvers, he cast about for an excuse to avoid a fight.

"Say, boys!" he exclaimed as he came to an abrupt standstill, "it's dollars to cents that this cuss has got a gang of police handy or else he wouldn't stand for to fight."

"Let's git, or we'll all be run in!"

Fear is a contagious disease and the gang were infected with it immediately.

All believed that their leader's guess was correct, and they retreated as speedily as they had advanced.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

URGENT ARGUMENTS.

THE first impulse of the Demon Detective was to pursue the outlaws when he saw them take refuge in flight, for his blood was hot and like the brute when it has once tasted blood he thirsted for more.

He even went so far as to take a dozen steps forward, but then reflection came to his aid and he cried:

"No, no, let the scoundrels go this time; blood enough has been shed by me to-night, and then I do not really hunger for the lives of these miserable wretches, who are but the blind tools of a master scoundrel."

"It is the Romany Rye himself—the Gypsy Gentleman—whom I seek, and never will I rest content until I either insnare or kill him!"

As he finished the speech a groan from Red Terry attracted his attention.

He advanced to where the outlaw lay upon the ground.

Red Terry was not dead, as Fox had anticipated, but he had received an ugly wound, the bullet having cut through his side.

By the time the Demon Detective came up to him, the other ruffians disappeared around the rock which had before hidden them from sight.

"No danger of those fellows returning," Fox observed, as he paused by the side of the prostrate man. "They haven't any idea of risking their precious persons unless the chances are all in their favor."

Red Terry gave vent to another groan, then opened his eyes and glared up in hatred at the man to whose revolver-bullet he owed his wound.

"Well, you still have some hold on life, I see," the Demon Detective remarked.

"No thanks to you," the wounded ruffian retorted.

"You did your best to fit me for a hole in the ground."

"Say, rather, that it was your own evil acts which brought the danger upon you," the other replied.

"Did you not seek my life as though I were a wild beast, only fit to be hunted down and killed?"

"Didn't you come sneaking into our secret retreat, cursed spy that you are?" Red Terry cried, fiercely.

"Wasn't it your idea to worm yourself into our secrets, so that you could land the whole of us in the stone jug, and, maybe, introduce the necks of a few of the boys to the hangman's rope?"

"Are you not all bloodthirsty villains, who deserved nothing better than such a fate, from the meanest man in the gang up to your leader, the Romany Rye?" the Demon Detective demanded.

"What in blazes put you on our track, anyway?" the ruffian growled.

"Destiny," responded the man-hunter.

"Don't you know that it is not possible for a band of men, leagued together for criminal purposes alone, to exist for many weeks without a bloodhound rising up to hunt them down?"

"Well, I reckon that is so, but until you came into the field the rest of the detectives never troubled us much."

"Because they were not a match for your leader, who is a ruffian with brains, and therefore conducts matters differently from the usual gang captains."

The detectives are used to the old way—proceed on old methods, and so the Romany Rye has laughed their skill to scorn."

"It isn't skill that they lack so much as pluck!" Red Terry exclaimed.

"There isn't a man on the force who would be willing to encounter the risk that you have run to night, and that is where the trouble is. By rights we ought to have wiped you out, and if you wasn't the most lucky and plucky devil that ever 'piped' a man off, we would have finished you when we got you in the cave to-night."

"I suppose you have an idea about this time that there was a job put up on you?"

"Oh, yes, I was led into a trap, of course, but it wasn't strong enough to hold me."

"That's so, and I reckon from what I have seen of you to-night that it would be no easy job to fix a snare to trap you."

"Because I am ordained by fate to be the agent to destroy the Gypsy Gentleman and all his band!"

"Oh, bosh! you can't make me believe that!" Red Terry exclaimed, incredulously.

"If this wound which you have received is not a mortal one, you may live to see that what I have stated is only the truth."

"I'm going to live!" the other asserted, confidently.

"You kin bet your boots on it. I'm a tough old sinner, and I'm not going to croak now, just because I've got a bullet in among my ribs."

"It's an ugly wound, I know, but it ain't enough to make me pass in my checks yet awhile."

"I'm glad of that—I'm glad, now I come to reflect upon the matter, that I didn't kill you outright," the Demon Detective observed, thoughtfully.

"Oh! are you?" and the wounded ruffian looked incredulous as he uttered the words.

"Yes, for if I had killed you then I should not have been able to hold this conversation with you."

"Well, that is true enough, but I don't see how it is going to profit you much," the ruffian responded, a little uneasy, for there was to his thinking something ominous in the manner of the other.

"As it is, you are able to talk, and I can gain some information from you."

"Not by a blamed sight!" Red Terry blurted out. "You can't play any game of that kind on me. I am true blue, I am, and I never squealed on a pal in my life!"

"You consider that a merit, I suppose, but in the eyes of the law it isn't one," the Demon Detective observed, reflectively.

"Under all conditions of life informers are a necessity, and government cannot be carried on without their aid."

"Now, then, I want some information from you in regard to the Gypsy Gentleman—this Romany Rye, who has so cleverly succeeded in concealing himself from the scrutiny of the police."

"It is well known that such a man exists, but, so far, no detective has been able to locate him."

"You will not be luckier than the rest," responded the other, in a sulky way.

"Do you think so?" and a peculiar look appeared in the restless eyes of the bloodhound.

"Yes, I do; I know it."

"Many times in this uncertain life of ours we think we know, when in reality we do not."

"You are only wasting time in trying to get me to squeal."

"If you have knowledge you will speak."

"Not by a blamed sight!" the ruffian replied, doggedly.

"Oh! yes, you will."

"Nary time, and you can't make me."

"We will see about that."

"You have got me in a tight place, I know, but all you can do is to throw me into the stone jug; you can't prove any murder on me, so there ain't any hanging matter about it."

"If you had the fear of death before your eyes you might be induced to talk then?" and as he put the question the bloodhound looked at the wounded man in such a peculiar way that it fairly seemed to make Red Terry shiver.

"Well, I ain't saying whether it would or not."

"Why, of course it would!" the detective cried, emphatically.

"There cannot be any question about that. Life is sweet to even a meaner wretch than you are, and if upon your speaking, or not speaking, your existence depended there isn't much doubt that you would be glad to tell all you know in regard to the Gypsy Gentleman."

Red Terry was no dull-witted scoundrel and he felt satisfied from the manner of the bloodhound that he had some deep purpose in view—a purpose which boded no good to him.

"Maybe I would and maybe I wouldn't," he rejoined, much troubled.

"But it don't make much difference anyway because such a trick cannot be worked."

"Oh, yes it can. Don't you run away with that idea."

"I reckon I know what can be done and what can't. I'll swear I know nothing about the Romany Rye and that ends it."

"If you were in the hands of the authorities perhaps it would, but you have not yet been delivered into their power; you are here in mine and utterly helpless."

"I believe that you do know something of this mysterious outlaw, and I have made up my mind that you must tell me all you know and if I find you obstinate I will subject you to such torture as the merciless men of the olden time extended to their prisoners."

"You wouldn't dare!" the wounded man gasped in horror.

"Wouldn't I? You never made a bigger mistake in your life."

"See!"

And the Demon Detective picked up a little twig from the ground.

"Suppose I insert this in your wound and twist it around?"

A shriek of agony escaped from the lips of the ruffian as the detective's hand approached him.

"For Heaven's sake, don't torture me!" he cried.

"Speak then, or the torments of the lost souls, writhing in everlasting fires, shall be yours!"

There wasn't the slightest trace of mercy visible in the stern face of the human bloodhound, and Red Terry, hardened ruffian though he was, quailed at the prospect.

"Spare me and I will tell you all I know, but it isn't much, for the Gypsy Gentleman is an old hand at the business and does not trust his secrets to any one."

"Make a clean breast of it and I will do all I can for you."

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

AFTER the departure of the lady the young actor sat in the carriage for fully five minutes before he made a movement, during which time he reflected earnestly upon the situation.

In his mind there was a strong impulse to follow the girl, and he was debating with himself whether it would be strictly honorable or not so to do.

"What possible harm can it do her if I succeed in discovering who and what she is?" he asked himself.

"She did not ask me not to seek to solve

the mystery, although I have no doubt that, for the present at least, she would prefer I should not do so.

"But is it wise in her to think in that way and am I morally bound to yield obedience to her wishes?"

"It is evident from what she has told me that she is placed in a peculiar situation, and if in the future it becomes more complicated, and she needs the assistance of a friend like myself, could I not render her more assistance by being in possession of all the facts in the case?"

"Decidedly so!" he exclaimed, emphatically, in conclusion.

"There isn't the least doubt about that. The story she told me was her own, she admitted that, and there will not be anything dishonorable in the action if I ascertain who she really is.

"But where am I? This is a strange locality, and I do not remember to have ever been up this way before."

Mortimer descended from the carriage, resolved to question the driver.

As he had expected, that worthy was prepared to answer when information was asked.

"This hyer is up in the outskirts of Yonkers," the Jehu answered, when asked in regard to the locality.

"We are on Broadway now, continuation of the same old Broadway as is down in the city, you know.

"That 'ere avenue where the lady has gone leads up on the hills where the swells live. I dunno its name, but there's some mighty fine houses when you come to git up on the hill."

Mortimer looked around him carefully and noted the surroundings, until he became satisfied that he could find the place again at any time.

He did not judge that it would be wise to attempt to follow the girl and thus play the spy upon her, but he resolved to visit the locality in the daytime and see if he could not discover a clew to her whereabouts.

"Begging yer pardon for int'rfering, seeing as how it ain't no business of mine," said the driver, "but ain't that the young gal wot you was hunting arter a while ago?"

"Yes, it is the same."

Well, we didn't make the rifle that time, did we?"

"No, we only had our labor for our pains."

"That was 'cos we didn't come up anywhere near as far as this. We didn't cross the creek you know, but nosed around Bloomingdale."

"Yes, I remem'ber."

"I'd be willing to bet a trifle that we could do the trick now!" the hackman exclaimed.

"I shouldn't be surprised, for we now have a good idea in regard to the exact locality, while before we had nothing but guesswork to go on."

"Yes, and we were at least a couple of miles out of our way too."

"We will try it on again to-morrow if you are at liberty," Mortimer remarked.

"Oh, yes; I ain't engaged and would be glad of the chance.

"I'd go any man a ten-dollar note that I kin find out where that young gal hangs out!" the hackman declared, emphatically.

"You see, sir, I kept my peepers open to-night and I'll go bail that though she was all kivered up I would be able to know her ag'in in the minute I laid eyes onto her.

"And if you hain't any objection, sir, to trust the business to me, I think I could do better than you.

"That is, I take it that, mebbe, you wouldn't like the gal to know you was a-looking arter her."

"Well, I should prefer that she should not know it, although my search is instigated by a good motive."

"Of course; well, you see, the chances are 'bout ten to one that if you went to nosing around the neighborhood she would be apt to see you and then all the fat would be in the fire, 'cos she knows you, and if she happened to see you would have a suspicion of what you was up to, while I am a stranger, and if I went from house to house, making out that I was a book-agent, or a sewing-machine man, one of the coves, you know, as is allers anxious to see the lady of the

houses the odds are big that I would strike the gal."

The young actor saw the wisdom of the man's words and expressed his approbation of the plan.

"I'll meet you to-morrow then at Union Square, nine o'clock, and we'll try the scheme," Mortimer said.

"I'll be on hand, as right as nine-pence."

This ended the conversation.

Mortimer resumed his place in the carriage and was driven to the city.

On his homeward ride he reflected upon the matter and saw how wise was the counsel of the hackman.

He could make the inquiries without exciting any suspicions, while if the girl should happen to catch sight of him in the neighborhood of her home she would be sure to suspect what he was doing in the locality.

The young actor's dreams that night were pleasant ones, for he dreamed only of the beautiful girl whose acquaintance he had made in so strange a manner.

Promptly the next morning at nine o'clock Mortimer made his appearance in Union Square.

The hackman was on his stand, all ready for the trip.

The young actor entered the vehicle and off they went.

In due time they reached the spot where they had halted on the previous night.

The hackman reined in his steeds and the vehicle came to a halt.

Dismounting from the box, the Jehu came to the door of the carriage and addressed Mortimer:

"Hyer we are, sir," he said.

"Now, I reckon you had better stop right hyer in the hack while I goes on a-nosing trip up into the hill."

"I'll go bail that it won't take me long to do the trick."

"All right; I will remain here until you return."

The hackman started on his mission and was soon lost to sight.

Mortimer remained in the hack for about ten minutes and then, growing tired of the confinement, concluded to get out and walk up and down for a bit.

Just as he descended from the vehicle a man, rather poorly dressed in dark clothes, came slowly up the street.

Mortimer and the new-comer came face to face and the recognition was mutual.

The stranger was the man who had come so timely to the young actor's assistance when he had been assaulted by the ruffians belonging to the Gypsy Gentleman's band on the Bloomingdale road.

From the manner in which the chief of police had spoken on that occasion the actor had formed the idea that the man to whom, as the superintendent had informed him, he owed his life, was one of the detective force, and as there was something about him that made a most favorable impression upon Mortimer, he greeted him warmly.

"What are you doing up this way?" the Demon Detective asked, glancing at the hack and immediately coming to the conclusion that something out of the common was transpiring.

"But I suppose I am a little indiscreet in asking the question," the bloodhound hastened to add, as he noticed that the young man hesitated as if uncertain in regard to his reply.

"I would not for the world pry into your private affairs. I but asked a careless question, and perhaps we had better consider it unsaid."

While the detective had been speaking, the idea flashed into Mortimer's brain that it would be wise to make a confidant of this grave, stern man, who seemed to him like a living embodiment of fate itself.

The actor was prone to act upon impulse and upon this occasion no sooner did the idea occur to him than he resolved to confide in the detective and seek his counsel, and so he revealed to him all the particulars of the affair.

Fox listened with the utmost attention and when the actor ended by asking his advice replied that he did not think he had any to give.

"As far as I can see you have acted wisely in the matter from beginning to end."

"I think you are wise too in your present

quest. The idea of the lady trying to keep her identity a secret from you is but a girlish whim, for there isn't any doubt that if she needs aid from you, it can better be afforded if you know all the particulars of the case."

Now see upon what little things the affairs of this uncertain life of ours do hang.

Mortimer, in relating the particulars of the affair to the detective, had neglected to mention the name that the girl had once given him.

Being convinced that it was a false one, assumed only as a disguise, he had dismissed it from his mind as being an unimportant matter, but if he had uttered the name it would have immediately given a clew to the detective and set him at once upon a scent which he would have followed with the fidelity of a bloodhound.

"I am on a little quest myself up in this neighborhood and the information which I have to guide me is scanty in the extreme," Fox continued.

"I am in search of a man whom I am very anxious to find, and all the clew I have to his identity is the fact that his initials are G. G., and he resides somewhere below Yonkers."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A CLEW AT LAST.

"WELL, you haven't much to go upon," the young actor remarked.

"No, the fellow whom I seek is a master scoundrel, and it is no easy matter to hunt him down.

"He lives behind a screen of lies. With the usual leading scoundrel of this kind, when some of his band are captured it generally is not a hard task to either frighten or bribe some of the rascals to inform upon their chief; but this fellow is an uncommon scoundrel, and anticipating that something of the sort might happen in his case, he took such measures that none of his gang could betray him, even if they so desired.

"As far as I can ascertain, not a single man of the band really knows who the chief is.

"Whenever he is seen by any of the gang he is always carefully disguised, and though I forced one of the principal men of the band to make a clean breast of it and tell me all he knew, the only fact about the man I was able to obtain was that, on one occasion the chief had let fall a handkerchief which my man happened to pick up.

"It was an elaborate affair, of white silk, with two initials worked in colors in one corner."

"An extremely slight clew," Mortimer remarked.

"Yes; the letters were 'G. G.', and so my man came to the conclusion that his chief was masquerading in upper-tendom somewhere under some name the initials of which were G. G.

"Then, too, from some casual remarks which the chief had let fall from time to time, he formed the opinion that he resided somewhere in the upper part of Manhattan island, or possibly just above the island, in Westchester county, near Yonkers."

"The second clew is, if anything, slighter than the first."

"Such slight clews sometimes hang men, though," the bloodhound remarked, grimly.

"This fellow whom I am pursuing is no common scoundrel, as I have told you, and, with such a man, it is not possible to come upon a broad and well-defined track."

"I can readily understand that."

"This fellow is a genius; ever since he has pursued his career of crime he has managed to baffle the police in the most complete manner.

"As near as I can make out, the scoundrel is occupying a good position in the world, has the right of entrance into the houses of men who are ranked as millionaires, and takes advantage of the fact to hatch schemes of plunder which his associates carry out."

"I see, a first-class brigand and no mistake!" the young actor exclaimed.

"Yes, and my idea is that with such a man, the bloodhound who essays the task of running him down must depend a great deal upon the chance of accident.

"Man may plan as carefully as he pleases, but if fate chooses to step into the lists against him, all his cunning schemes will be set at naught. He may think he has guard-

ed every point, but there will be some chance against which he has either not provided, or it arises during the execution of the deep-laid plan, so that it could not be foreseen, and through it his destruction will be worked."

"There isn't the least doubt that you have hit upon the right idea."

"You may wonder that I have made a confidant of you who are almost a stranger to me," the Demon Detective observed, abruptly.

"But there is something in your face which assures me that you will not betray my confidence."

"Oh, you may be certain in regard to that!" the young actor asserted, warmly.

"I haven't forgotten that I owe my life to you, and I now take occasion to say that if I can ever aid you in any way, you may command me, even to the risk of life."

The Demon Detective extended his hand and the other grasped it.

The two men fully understood each other.

Just at this point the young actor happened to glance up the street which led from Broadway up the hill and caught sight of the figure of the hackman returning.

"Here comes my Jehu!" he exclaimed, directing the attention of his companion to the hackman, who was hurrying along as though he had important tidings to communicate.

The keen-eyed detective noticed this and remarked as much to his companion.

"From his appearance one would be apt to think he had been successful in his mission," he said.

"Yes, it certainly looks that way."

When the hackman came up, he slackened his pace and glanced at the detective as though he was uncertain whether he ought to speak before him or not.

Mortimer saw the expression upon the man's face and understood its meaning.

"It is all right," he said, "do not be afraid to speak. This gentleman is a particular friend of mine and I have just explained to him what object brought me up here."

"Oh, if it is all right, then there can't be any cause for to keep dark 'bout the thing," the driver remarked with an air as though the assurance had taken a weight from his mind.

"Yes, go ahead, speak freely!" Mortimer said.

"I judge from the speediness of your return that you have not been unsuccessful."

"Well, now, boss, you kin bet your bottom dollar on that, and you will win every time!" the driver cried.

"Why, it was the softest snap that I have struck in a dog's age! Jest as easy as rolling off a log; I wish I may die if it wasn't!"

"Lord love yer. I struck it at the very first house!"

"The first house, eh?"

"Yes, the first house that amounted to anything after I got to the top of the hill and turned into the other street."

"That was certainly fortunate," Mortimer observed, and the Demon Detective nodded assent.

"I had my peepers wide open, you know," the hackman continued.

"I didn't go nosing along with my blinkers on the ground like a half-blind puppy."

Both of the hearers smiled at the odd description.

"I kept watch on her from the box last night when she started up the hill, and as I heard her say to this gent"—and he nodded to the young actor—"that she wasn't afraid for to go alone I reckoned that her house wasn't far off, 'cos if it had been, she would have been skeered."

"Shrewdly observed," Fox remarked.

"So I made up my mind that the moment I struck the houses on top of the hill I would tackle every one of them, and keep my eyes wide open too at the same time."

"Well, gents, I wish I may die, if in the very first house I put my peepers in I didn't find the young gal, a-sitting, sewing, at one of the front windows on the second story."

Mortimer had listened with intense interest, and at this point he could not help exclaiming:

"It was a lucky chance!"

"Yes, gov'ner, you can bet all yer ducats on that. It was all plain sailing arter I see'd the gal."

"I skipped up to the house as bold as brass. If you noticed, boss, I've got on a different suit of clothes from wot I wore the other night, and a hat instead of a cap, such as I usually wear, so I felt sure the young lady wouldn't be able to know me, if she took any notice of me the other night, and I reckoned that she didn't for I didn't see her taking stock of me."

"A wise precaution."

"Nothing like looking out for these little matters," the hackman observed with a grin.

"But it didn't make no difference, no way, as it happened, for she never looked up, nor took no notice of me, at all."

"I was all fixed for the servant gal if she happened to be Irish, and she was."

"I'm a Kerry man myself, born there, but raised in this country so I ain't got no brogue."

"Well, to come right down to the point, I made out that I was a hostler looking for a job and had been told to come there, and at the same time I was looking for a cousin of mine, one Maggie O'Neal from Kerry."

"Everything was just lovely; the gal was a good-natured, red-haired heifer, she was glad to see me, and I hadn't any difficulty in finding out all I wanted without her suspicioning that anything was wrong."

"The young lady is Miss Ophelia Bullwinkle, daughter of Judge Bullwinkle, and the gal guesses that she is going to be married to a swell who has a fine place down on the Bloomingdale road, 'cos he has been paying her a lot of attention lately."

"Indeed! and what is the name of this gentleman—did you learn it?"

"Oh, yes, I got all the p'int's," responded the driver with a chuckle.

"I know the party too, that is I know of him, 'cos I drove one of his men home one night, a fellow who is his secretary, or something of that sort, and he was full as a tick, and when I helped him into my coach and got him out again, he used some of the worst language that I ever heard."

Then the man dropped his voice and assumed a cautious air.

"You know, of course—'cos I let on to you, and as this gent is a friend of yours I don't mind telling him."

"I did time up the river once—put a knife into a fellow when I had too much liquor aboard, and went to the stone jug for it too; maybe I would have used the knife, anyway, for there was a gang at me, and if I hadn't knifed the leader I reckon they would have finished me."

Both the others nodded in token that they understood and appreciated the situation.

"Well, up there, of course, I picked up a deal of knowledge of crooked men, their ways and talk, and I'm blamed if this drunken secretary of this hyer swell didn't go on jest like a cross cove for all the world."

"Why the patter flowed from his lips as freely as though he had been a crackman all his life. Strange, wasn't it, and he was dressed like a lord?"

The Demon Detective and the young actor exchanged glances.

Was it possible that accident was about to place in the hands of the man-hunter a clew which would lead him straight to the prey he sought?

It was very odd, to say the least.

"What was the name of this gentleman?" Fox asked, speaking carelessly as though the matter was of little importance to him.

"Gloster—Gideon Gloster," the hackman replied.

It was as much as Mortimer could do to conceal his emotions, for he realized that a clew had been obtained. The initials on the handkerchief were G. G.

The man-hunter was on the scent again.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A DEEP PLOT.

It was night, and Gideon Gloster sat in his private apartment awaiting the return of his secretary, Robert Ainsworth, better known to the police as Cheeky Bob.

The clock on the mantle-piece marked the hour of ten before the secretary made his appearance.

"Well, how is everything?" Gloster inquired in the languid way which he affected

when playing the role of the blooded swell in public.

"All right."

"All the arrangements made?"

"Everything is fixed."

"That's good. You are a valuable man, Bob."

"Yes, it will be a pity when I am forced to stretch hemp one of these days," the other responded.

"Oh, I guess there isn't any danger of anything of that kind happening," Gloster remarked.

"Well, there's no telling."

"If you are wise enough to keep your wits about you, there isn't any necessity of such a fate coming to you; but if you are fool enough to get drunk, as you did the other night, there's no telling how quick you will find yourself inside of the stone jug," Gloster continued.

"For when the wine is in, the wits are out, and most certainly you had no idea of what you were about when you came home that time."

"Oh, well, don't say anything more about it," Ainsworth replied, evidently deeply regretting the imprudence of which he had been guilty.

"It is the only time that I have been off on a spree in years, and it is not likely to happen again. I'm no drinking man, you know, anyway, and it does not take much to go to my head."

"I got full before I knew what I was about, but I can assure you it will not happen again."

"See that it don't, for you are a perfect donkey when you are muddled with liquor, and if I had not happened to be in the house, so I could put you to bed when you came in the other night, there is no telling how much mischief might have been done."

"You were so drunk that you didn't know what you were saying, and if some one of the servants had happened to have got hold of you, you might have let the cat out of the bag, and then the deuce would have been to pay."

"Oh, I don't think I would have been foolish enough to do that, although I admit I was so drunk as not to know what I was doing."

"Bob, you are the only man whom I have trusted with my secret, and I tell you frankly that even a little slip like the one you made the other night would prove our ruin."

"There is a man on our track now whom I dread more than all the rest put together."

"When I say a man, I doubt if I am giving him his right title, for he seems more like a demon than a human."

"That is a fact. The fellow does not seem to know what fear is," the other observed, reflectively.

"That little job that you put up on him the other night ought to have wiped him out; but, as it was, it only cost us the lives of some of our best men. Another such a blow as that, and it will be the ruin of our band."

"I begin to think our time is about up," observed Gloster, thoughtfully.

"If you have noticed about matters of this kind, all such bands run for a certain time and everything works smoothly and prosperously with them; it is with such enterprises as it is with political parties."

"All have a certain time to run, just as if they had a destiny to fulfill, and then, hey presto! to eternal smash they go."

"I think our band has about run its course and I propose to get out before an explosion comes which may result in landing all of us in the State Prison."

"Well, if I anticipated that anything of the kind would be apt to happen I should endeavor to get out and secure a safe haven of refuge before the explosion came," the other remarked.

"That is my idea exactly," the chief observed with an approving nod.

"And that is the reason why I am so anxious to arrange this Bullwinkle business."

"The girl is a charming creature and, if I am forced by adverse circumstances to go abroad for a while, will make a charming companion and the money I will acquire with her doubtless will come in handy too."

"The scheme is all arranged. The old house up the river is prepared for the divine."

Ophelia's reception, and when I get her fairly in my power and she finds that her reputation is compromised, there isn't a doubt that she will be glad to accept my offer to make her legally my wife."

"My dear old boy, you have a rare head for arranging these little details," the other exclaimed in admiration.

"Oh, yes, I flatter myself I can see as far into a millstone as the next man," Gloster remarked, complacently.

"But now to business; you have arranged the scheme for carrying off the girl so that it will be sure to be successful?"

"Oh, yes, thanks to your forethought in getting Molly into the Bullwinkle household, there wasn't the least difficulty in arranging it."

"That girl, Molly, is a treasure," the chief observed, thoughtfully.

"Ever since she joined the band she has proven to be one of the most valuable members, woman though she is."

"She seems to be only a simple-hearted country girl, perfectly honest and trustworthy, although not particularly shrewd."

"Her dull, stolid face is her fortune. It would take a man with the gifts of a prophet to look into her countenance and detect that she was one of the most experienced thieves in the country."

"Fully twenty times has she tampered with the locks in houses where she has been employed and admitted some of our cracksmen, who have thus been enabled to carry off all the portable articles of value in the house, without risking the success of the enterprise by being obliged to break into the crib."

"She worked this job to the Queen's taste," Ainsworth remarked.

"No doubt, no doubt, Moll is the girl to do it."

"Yes, she played her cards so well that the young lady has become quite attached to her. Moll, you know, is the up-stairs girl, and she has also acted as a sort of maid to the young lady; and, as luck would have it, just at this time Miss Ophelia is greatly troubled with sleeplessness, and the doctor has prescribed a sleeping-draught, which she takes every night at eleven o'clock."

"That is about the time that she goes up-stairs to prepare for bed, you know."

"I see, I see."

"Moll always prepares the medicine for her, and so it will be the easiest thing in the world for her to give the girl a dose which will lay her out in ten or fifteen minutes after she gets it down."

"Then, there's a back staircase, only used by the servants, and at eleven o'clock every soul in the house will be in bed, with the exception of the judge himself, and to-night he will not be home until about one, as he is to attend a grand blow-out, given by some lawyer swells down-town. The party doesn't sit down until about nine, and as there are a dozen or more big guns who are booked for speeches, the odds are large that it will be nearer two than one before the judge shows up."

"Not a doubt of it!" Gloster exclaimed.

"We are to drive in with a *coupe*—a small, private-looking affair, you know, so as not to excite attention. Just such another *coupe* as the judge's—"

"Ours fills the bill exactly," the other remarked.

"Yes, at a quarter past eleven to the minute, we are to drive in, and then, Moll—who is as strong as any ordinary man, you know—will drop a dark cloak around the girl, bring her down-stairs in her arms, and deliver her to us."

"We are to take the girl, place her in the carriage and drive off, while Moll will return and arrange matters in the house, so that no one will be apt to discover until the morning that the girl is not asleep in her bed."

"Capitally arranged!" Gloster exclaimed.

"A miracle alone can prevent such a splendidly-plotted scheme as that from succeeding!"

"Oh, we will work the trick all right; there isn't a doubt of it!" Ainsworth asserted, confidently.

"Have you prepared the letters?"

"Yes, Moll has one, and here is the other for you as you requested."

He took a delicate, perfumed little note from his pocket, and handed it to Gloster,

who looked at the superscription at the head of the note as he opened it, with a smile, which deepened as he ran his eyes over the writing that followed.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" he exclaimed.

"You are a genius in this line if there ever was one!"

"Yes; yet my old writing-master always predicted that my pen would get me hanged."

"Not unlikely," Gloster observed, dryly.

"But come, it is time we were off!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ABDUCTION.

THE two men descended to the stables, and attended to getting the *coupe* ready, without calling upon any of the servants for assistance.

While Gloster was a very king of "crooks," yet he was careful to have honest servants around him, there being but three exceptions to the rule.

Ainsworth, his secretary, the butler and the housekeeper, and his idea in having these two on the "cross," was so they could watch the rest of the servants, and give timely notice if any of them betrayed a disposition to pry into matters that did not concern them.

It did not take the two long to prepare the *coupe*, and then they set out.

Early hours were the rule in Gloster's mansion.

By ten, every servant was expected to be indoors, and rarely was permission extended to any one to remain out after that hour.

So, as it was nearly eleven when the *coupe*, with Gloster inside, and Ainsworth on the box, took its departure, there wasn't any danger of observation.

They timed their speed so well that it was just a quarter past eleven when they drove through the gate on the Bullwinkle place, and halted by the rear door, which was at the foot of the back staircase.

Ainsworth drove very slowly; the horse's shoes had been removed, the wheels of the vehicle well oiled, and the "turn-out" seemed to glide over the soft driveway like some ghostly equipage.

Hardly had it halted at the door of the mansion, when the portal opened, and the woman Moll, whom the two had praised so highly, made her appearance, bearing the senseless form of the beautiful Ophelia in her arms.

"She's good for an hour, I reckon," she remarked, as she delivered her burden to Gloster, who received the girl with tender care, and placed her up in a corner of the carriage.

"Oh, that is all right; I've a sponge and some chloroform in my pocket, so I can keep her senses dulled until we arrive at our destination."

The woman retreated into the house, the *coupe* was driven cautiously out into the street, and after it had got a few hundred yards away from the house, the pace was increased to a sharp trot.

The abduction had been most successfully accomplished, and no trace was left to denote how the trick was done.

The *coupe* went down into the main road, and then proceeded in a northerly direction until about ten miles were covered.

It finally came to a halt at a little dock, jutting out into the river.

A boat was in waiting there, wherein sat Bow-legged Mike and another stalwart ruffian.

Gloster, with the girl in his arms, got into the boat.

Ainsworth turned the *coupe*, and took the homeward road.

Propelled by the strong arms of the muscular men, the light craft shot out into the stream.

The night was hazy, and the light of the moon obscured by passing clouds, but the boatmen kept on steadily rowing, evidently having a perfect knowledge in regard to their destination.

The boat went up-stream for about a mile, and then made a landing on the west bank of the river.

A small deserted-looking house loomed up on the shore.

A building evidently erected by some fishermen, but long since abandoned.

It was a fit retreat for the king of a band of desperate cracksmen.

The party landed, the boat was drawn up on the beach, out of the way of the tide, and they all entered the house.

It was a one-story-and-attic building, with a large room in front, one in the center of the house, and another in the rear.

In the front room were the ruffians comprising the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye, who had escaped the slaughter at the time when the mad band of the Demon Detective exploded the keg of gunpowder in the cave.

After the destruction of that haunt the Gypsy Gentleman had chosen this retreat for a head-quarters.

The ruffians were amusing themselves by playing cards, and drinking from a keg of beer which they had evidently stolen from some up-town saloon.

Gloster carried his burden into the rear room, and deposited her on a rude bed, which had been fixed up out of some old boxes and blankets, in one corner of the apartment.

He had cautioned the ruffians in the front room, when passing through it, to be careful in regard to what noise they made, for it would be fatal to the success of his plans to allow the girl to understand into what a den she had fallen.

As the reader has doubtless guessed long ere this, Gideon Gloster was the Gypsy Gentleman.

And before getting out of the *coupe* when he reached the river's bank, he was careful to assume his disguise, thus hiding his identity from his men.

But when he had gained the rear apartment, and sat down by the rude table, upon which a candle burned, to wait the recovery of the girl, he removed the disguise again, and stowed it away in one of the capacious pockets of the long English-like ulster which he wore.

The door was not locked, but he had his band under too strict control to fear there was danger of any one of them intruding into the apartment.

It was a good half-hour before the girl came to her senses, and during the wait, Gloster never manifested the least impatience, but sat and gazed with admiring eyes upon the beautiful girl whom he destined for his victim.

At last the power of the drug ebbed away, and Ophelia opened her eyes, gazing with a vacant stare around her.

At first she was utterly at a loss to account for her presence in such a strange place, as she had not the slightest knowledge of what had occurred.

The last thing she remembered was the drinking of the medicine handed to her as usual by her attendant and then feeling a drowsiness come over her.

After that, all was a blank.

As she began to feel something like herself again, she sat up and stared around her with astonished eyes.

"What does this mean—where am I and how comes it that you are here?" she demanded, imperiously, addressing Gloster, who smiled at her in his most affable manner, just as if nothing out of the common had occurred.

"Why, my dear Ophelia, is it possible that you have forgotten what has happened?" he asked in pretended amazement.

"I knew that the excitement had caused you to swoon, but I hadn't the least idea that it would affect your memory."

"In Heaven's name what do you mean?" cried the girl in alarm, springing to her feet.

"Is it possible that you have forgotten all about it?" Gloster cried.

"Well, well, this is one of the strangest things I ever came across."

"Man, man, explain, or you will drive me crazy!" exclaimed the now almost distracted girl.

"My dearest Ophelia, calm yourself," he urged.

"There is not the slightest cause for alarm, I assure you. If you do not remember what has taken place, read this note, which you left for your father and that will explain all."

He produced the note, which he had received from Ainsworth, and handed it to the girl.

"A note from me to my father!" she exclaimed, incredulously.

"Why, you can see for yourself that it is in your own handwriting."

"It certainly looks like my hand—it is so nearly like it that I would believe that it *was* mine, only I know I never wrote it!" exclaimed the girl, terrible perplexed and examining the note with eyes full of wonder.

"Read it, and then you will surely remember," the gentleman counseled.

The girl obeyed, her voice quivering with emotion.

"DEAR FATHER:—

"By the time that you read this I will be far from home. Forgive me for the rash step which I am taking, but a sudden inclination has seized upon me and I find I am powerless to fight against it.

"I have fled with the man I love, and by the time that you peruse these lines I will be the happy wife of Gideon Gloster."

At this point the sheet of paper fell from her hand, for she could not contain her emotions.

"Oh, am I dreaming?" she cried; "but it is not the truth—I am not your wife!"

"No, but you will be, I trust, when the minister arrives."

"This letter is a forgery!"

"That is a copy, of course, for the original will be handed to your father when he returns home to-night. The servants have already read it, for you left it openly on the table. All the morning newspapers will contain a glowing account of the elopement, and if you do not consent to wed me your character will be ruined forever."

Hardly had the words left his lips when there was a terrific explosion.

The Demon Detective had tracked his prey and blown up the entire front of the house with dynamite.

All the gang were either killed or wounded by the explosion, the girl fainted, and, like a hungry lion raging for his prey, the Demon Detective rushed into the rear apartment.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

THE Demon Detective and the Gypsy Gentleman confronted each other.

Both of the men had a cocked and leveled revolver in their hands, and they glared at each other in desperation, while the moans of the wounded ruffians sounded in their ears.

"Again my star of fortune rises superior to that which sits in your house of light!" cried the Demon Detective in fierce glee.

"It is useless to wage war with me for I am your evil genius fated to drag you down to death!"

"Bah! do you think I believe in your fortune-teller's jargon?" cried the Gypsy Gentleman, with a desperate attempt to hide the fear which was really gnawing at his heart.

"You have not yet conquered me, although the chapter of accidents has favored you wonderfully. You have succeeded in destroying my band, but now that we stand face to face, man against man, the chances are even, and I am as likely to kill you as you are to kill me."

"Oh, no!" cried the detective, instantly, "the chances are not even."

"The weight of guilt is on your soul, and it will surely weaken your arm, while I, urged on by the God of vengeance, will undoubtedly come out the victor in this fight."

"Think of the wrongs that I have suffered at your hands."

"Think of my ruined life, my lost wife, my missing child."

"Did ever a man since this world began have more wrongs to nerve his arm?"

"What do I know of these things? Why do you accuse me?" cried the outlaw chief, his face deadly pale and his nerves evidently shaken.

"Because you are the arch-villain who has wrought all this wrong!" cried the Demon Detective, fiercely.

"It is useless for you to attempt to evade the responsibility."

"Though years have come and gone, still the crime is at your door. You destroyed my once happy home, aided by that accursed doctor who betrayed the trust reposed in him and whom, very soon, I shall call to a fearful account."

"I know you not, I tell you!" cried the outlaw, "and you rave like a maniac when you charge these crimes upon me."

"I have enough to answer for without taking burdens upon my shoulders which I have no right to bear."

"Oh, this denial will not do you the least bit of good!" cried the human bloodhound.

"I have marked you for my prey, and nothing in this world can save you from me."

"I am Nick Fox, the man whom men call the Demon Detective; and why? because I am utterly reckless of my life."

"I feel that I cannot die until I have delivered you up to the hands of justice—never will I rest satisfied until I see the hangman adjust the rope around your neck, and I witness you stand pinioned on the scaffold, waiting with trembling limbs for the signal to fall upon your ears that heralds your entrance into the other world."

"That hour you will never see!" cried the Romany Rye, wrought up to the pitch of desperation by the appalling picture.

"Rather would I perish by my own hand!"

"You will not be allowed to choose," replied the other, with fiend-like cruelty.

"When you are a captive I will watch over you as careful as the doting mother over her new born infant."

"You will not have a chance to practice self-destruction."

"Oh, no, I will see that you are reserved to adorn the gallows, and when your last hour comes, your guilty soul will quake with terror when you reflect that I, your victim, the man whom you so fearfully wronged, was the sole means of bringing you to the scaffold."

"You will know that I am standing by, gloating over your agony, and only regretting that my vengeance cannot follow you even into the other world, black-hearted, wolf-like villain that you are!"

"Liar! take your death from my hand!" cried the chief of the desperado band in the rage born of despair.

While the conversation had been going on, the Gypsy Gentleman believed he had "covered" the detective so surely that death would follow the shot.

But the sleuth-hound—warned in time by the expression in the eyes of the other that he intended a movement—succeeded in firing first, and although he would greatly have preferred to take the outlaw chief alive, yet so determined was he in his revenge, that he had made up his mind to kill the prey rather than suffer him to escape.

So the report of the Gypsy Gentleman's pistol was but the echo of the detective's shot.

The sleuth-hound had aimed to hit the elbow of the arm, the hand of which grasped the revolver.

It was his game to spoil the aim of the outlaw, and disable him without inflicting a mortal wound.

The aim was a true one; the bullet from the detective's revolver struck the outlaw on the elbow of his outstretched arm, spoiling his aim, so that the bullet from his pistol whizzed high in the air over the head of his foe.

But after striking the elbow, the ball glanced and pierced the breast of the Romany Rye.

With a hollow groan he staggered back, and then sunk down upon the sand.

The Demon Detective uttered an angry cry.

He feared that his prey was mortally wounded, and so his vengeance would be only half complete.

And he was right.

The bullet had gone through one of the lungs; inward bleeding had set in; the wounded man was not long for this world.

"The game is up, and you are the winner, Nick Fox," the wounded man gasped.

"Yes; yet I am not satisfied, for I hoped to place the rope around your neck!" cried the detective, approaching his foe and glaring at him with angry eyes.

"You have done me to death—are you not satisfied?" murmured the other.

"No; the wrongs you have inflicted upon me have turned me into a demon, and mercy is absent from my heart."

"Were you not the cause of my wife's death? And my daughter—my darling babe that my guilty wife carried to you—where is she? Ease your soul with a tardy repentance before it is too late."

"It is a lie—all a lie," the wounded man

gasped, speaking now with a great deal of difficulty.

"Your wife was true to you—she was weak, but not weak enough to fall my prey."

"She fled from me carrying your child with her."

"I searched for her in vain; I always believed that the old doctor knew where they were, but he swore he did not."

"The doctor who was a party to my ruin?"

"The same," gasped the sufferer, "he with the hunchback servant."

"I know the scoundrel, and I'll have the secret from him, or else tear the very heart from his breast!" cried the Demon Detective, with fiery energy.

"I've played a bold game, but you held too strong a hand for me; no scaffold, though—no rope for the Romany Rye—Ishmael, great father of the Romany race, look down upon your dying son—I have plundered the house-dwellers—I am a true son of Egypt—I—I—"

And then came the death-rattle in his throat.

The Gypsy Gentleman had gone to his last account.

His earthly reckoning was closed.

With a moody face the avenger looked down upon the lifeless body of the man whom he had hunted to his death.

"He had the heart of a wolf, and like a wolf he perished," Nick Fox exclaimed.

"But the end has not yet come; there are others who must be brought to an account."

"With the coming of the morning light will I take up the trail of this accursed doctor."

"If he has not taken the alarm and fled, I shall not have much trouble in hunting him down."

"But if he has sought to evade me by flight, there's not a corner of the earth that I will not ransack in my search."

"He may as well hope to escape death as to baffle my pursuit, for I swear never to know the meaning of the word rest until I hunt him down and wring from him the secret of my daughter's retreat!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE PURSUIT.

THE wholesale massacre of the best men in the outlaw band, completely broke up the gang, and then, too, some of the men who had escaped death, but received severe wounds, were only too glad to curry favor with the authorities by revealing all they knew about their associates.

It was the genius and the daring of Gloster that had held the band together, and now that he was gone, there wasn't any chance of the organization being revived.

With the death of the Gypsy Gentleman the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye ceased to exist.

The police authorities believed that it was the wisest plan to keep the particulars to themselves, particularly as the Demon Detective was not a man who cared to have his deeds blazoned to the public, and so the full details of the affair never came to light.

That the Gypsy Gentleman and the dashing speculator, Gloster, were one and the same, was a fact that the authorities did not make public.

In fact, one man only knew the truth, and that was the superintendent of police, to whom the Demon Detective revealed the mystery, and he did not think any good end would be served by making the knowledge public.

Of course the mysterious disappearance of such a well-known man as Gloster was a nine days' wonder, even in the great city of New York, which can generally boast of from eight to ten mysterious disappearances a week.

But when it was discovered what a hollow sham were his pretensions to great wealth, and that instead of a millionaire he was only a desperate adventurer, living from hand to mouth, the mystery of his abrupt disappearance was easily explained, so the credulous public cried.

He had come to the end of his rope, feared the tumbling down of the house of cards he had built up so carefully, and had fled with all the plunder that he could lay his hands upon, so as to avoid an exposure which would have stripped him of everything.

New York was satisfied with this explana-

tion, and in ten days' time the entire affair was forgotten.

Some new sensation had arisen that claimed the attention of the people.

Nick Fox was not a man to let the grass grow under his feet, and after he made his report to the superintendent of police and satisfied the chief that he had accomplished the destruction of the outlaw band, he set out immediately in search of the old doctor, with the hunchback servant, whom the reader will remember figured so prominently in the opening chapters of our story.

But as both the chief of police and the detective had anticipated the old fox had taken the alarm and fled.

And so carefully had he managed his flight that there wasn't a single clew to his whereabouts.

The old man was believed to be very wealthy, for he had been for years employed in hoarding up his ill-gotten gains, and the superintendent rather inclined to the belief that the man fled to a foreign land.

But the Demon Detective did not think so. "An old man who had spent all his life in this country would not be apt to go to a foreign clime, and if he did he would be pretty certain not to stay there, for he would not be comfortable," Nick Fox observed.

"This is a great country, and a fugitive possessed of means would be sure to think he could find some place of concealment where he could laugh at pursuit and discovery.

"The chances, to my thinking, are great that to the wilds of the West he has betaken himself.

"He will be found in some pleasant little nook remote from the great world, and one into which strangers seldom stray."

And acting on this idea, the Demon Detective set out on his travels.

He was amply provided with money, for the authorities had paid him in the most liberal manner for the great service he had rendered in destroying the secret band.

Stanch as the bloodhound on the trail he kept up the search.

As the reader has already seen, the Demon Detective was such a lucky man that it was no wonder the rascals, whom he pursued, should be superstitiously inclined to believe that he was more than human.

He succeeded in this quest which at the first glance, would appear to be about as fruitless as the traditional hunt for the needle in the bundle of hay.

In an obscure mining-camp, away down in the San Juan country, a hundred miles away from any road save the mule-track over the mountains that led into it, he found the man he sought.

Found him stretched upon the bed of death.

There had been a street-fight upon the previous night, and the old doctor happening to be abroad, was unlucky enough to stop a bullet intended for one of the fighters.

The wound was mortal, and the hunchback, when he found that his master was not long for this world, had improved the opportunity to decamp with all the doctor's valuables he could lay his hands upon.

The wounded man recognized the detective at once.

"Too late! too late!" he muttered. "I expected you would hunt me down some day, but you have come too late; my account with this world is about closed.

"I am proof now against all mortal vengeance. All I have to fear is the dread, unknown hereafter."

Briefly the detective related to him the particulars in regard to the Gypsy Gentleman, and the destruction of the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye.

"I did not know he was as bad as that when he employed me in the plot by means of which you were drugged, placed in a house, where, by means of false witnesses, you were accused of burglary and assault with intent to kill, and so railroaded into the State Prison.

"I fancied he was a wealthy sport, and as he paid me well I served him."

"You kept track of my wife and child after I was convicted?" asked Fox, anxiously.

"For a time, yes; but when your wife fled from the persecution of this man, I lost all trace of both."

The heart of the detective sunk.

It was a blind trail that he had followed so patiently, after all.

He believed the doctor spoke the truth, for why should he die with a lie on his lips?

The old man had not a single relative in the world, and so, as a tardy expiation of the wrong which he had done Nick Fox years ago, he made the detective his heir.

The doctor lingered for a day and then gave up the ghost.

The detective took the wealth thus strangely acquired without hesitation, for he knew it would help him to find his child, and the trail must be sought in New York city.

On his way out of the San Juan region he heard the story of the hunchback's death.

Justice had speedily overtaken him.

Fleeing in the night he had missed the road, and his horse, shying in the darkness, had flung him into one of the roaring mountain torrents, and the fierce waters soon battered the life out of him against the sharp rocks.

In ten days, after leaving the death-bed of the old doctor, the Demon Detective walked into police head-quarters in the city of New York.

Engaged in conversation with the superintendent was the young actor, Mortimer, whom the Demon Detective had rescued from the tender mercy of "The Greek" on the Bloomingdale road.

Warm was the greeting that Nick Fox received.

"You're just the man we want to see!" the chief exclaimed. "Mr. Mortimer has been hunting you for nearly a month. I knew you were out West somewhere, but although I tried my best, I wasn't able to reach you. This gentleman has found your daughter."

The reader probably has guessed this little mystery long ere this.

Ophelia Bullwinkle was Jennie Fox.

She had fallen in love with the young actor, had lingered in the street to see if he looked the same off the stage as when on, a girl's romance; this had led to their acquaintance, and with a maiden's bashfulness she had given her true name, and thus thrown the actor completely off the scent.

But when hurried into the union with Gloster, she, in her despair, had sought the man she loved and revealed all.

Mortimer, knowing Fox, was able to reveal the mystery which existed in regard to him.

By a lucky mining-strike old Bullwinkle was able to retrieve his shattered fortunes in a measure, and he did not throw any obstacles in the way of the lovers, while the true father was only too glad to give his new-found daughter to a man he liked.

The avenger had kept his vow, the Black-faced Band of the Romany Rye was a thing of the past, and by the last daring act which completed the destruction of the outlaws, the human bloodhound fully proved his right to the title so generally bestowed upon him of the Demon Detective.

THE END.

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